

**Food deal  
may fail**

THE 'OIL-for-food' deal aimed at easing the impact of devastating trade sanctions on the Iraqi people may be put in jeopardy because of the military stand-off between Iraq and the US.

While the US and other members of the Security Council insist the plan will not be a casualty of the current crisis, they differ in predicting its future. Members unanimously agreed on Tuesday on the necessity of Iraqi troop withdrawal from the northern town of Arbil, a Kurdish centre, before the regime is permitted to sell limited quantities of oil, but there are fears that the US may demand a renegotiation of the agreement.

A US State Department spokesman said it may be some months before the deal would be reconsidered and US officials hinted that there could be new demands placed on Iraq before the deal is implemented.

Meanwhile, Russia and France called for new negotiations between Iraq and UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali on the early implementation of the UN resolution on the deal, bearing in mind the safety of international personnel.

The agreement permits Baghdad to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to purchase food, medicine and goods for the Iraqi people. About \$260 million was earmarked for humanitarian supplies for the Kurdish provinces in the north, which are not under Baghdad control. The UN was charged with the responsibility for distribution of supplies in this region, using Arbil, which has been seized by Iraqi troops, as its centre.

**Council split**

MEMBERS of the UN Security Council were split on a British draft resolution to condemn Iraq for its offensive on Kurdish areas in northern Iraq, with council members arguing over whether the retaliatory US missile attack was warranted. Egypt, France, Russia and China opposed the draft during consultations on Tuesday and conceded that Iraq did not necessarily violate UN resolutions. The British draft would condemn Iraq's offensive, call for an immediate withdrawal of troops from Arbil, ask Iraq to stop interfering and request the freezing of Kurdish motions to resume talks. It makes no mention of the US attack, recognising that the world is divided on their legitimacy.

Earlier, the Russian ambassador had introduced an unsupported milder proposal expressing serious concern and calling on all parties including the US, Iraq and Iran to refrain from using force. Diplomats at the UN headquarters said a revised version of the British proposal that would still call for the withdrawal of the Iraqi troops could be adopted this week.

Any action in the council would be based on Resolution 688, adopted in 1991, which condemned the repression of Iraqi minorities at the end of the Gulf War, but deliberately excluded the use of force. The Security Council has maintained economic sanctions on Iraq since its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, during regular reviews conducted every 60 days.

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# End of an alliance

The most serious military confrontation with Iraq since the Gulf War underlined the collapse of the 1991 anti-Iraq coalition

US warships in the Gulf launched a second salvo of Tomahawk cruise missiles against military targets in southern Iraq yesterday, as the US extended a 'no-fly zone' to the edge of the capital, Baghdad.

Iraq immediately rejected the new air exclusion zone devised by President Bill Clinton and vowed to make Washington "speak and eat". AFP reported.

The White House said in a statement that 17 cruise missiles had been fired at southern Iraq yesterday to knock out air defence installations missed during the first missile strike on Tuesday. A US Navy spokesman said the missiles were fired by the USS Jefferson City, a Los Angeles class attack submarine; the destroyer USS Russell, the destroyer USS Labron and the destroyer USS Hewitt.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said yesterday's assault was a follow-up operation to hit targets missed in Tuesday's long-range of 27 cruise missiles fired from B-52 bombers and US warships in the Gulf. "It's an effort to ensure we've done everything

possible to suppress air defences before we start enforcing the expanded no-fly zone," Bacon said.

All told, 44 cruise missiles have been fired at 15 sites, all in southern Iraq, the Associated Press said.

The Iraqi army said one person was killed and seven wounded in the second strike, it did not specify whether they were soldiers or civilians. According to Iraq, five soldiers died and 19 people, including civilians, were injured in Tuesday's attack.

The United States, with British backing, expanded the no-fly zone in southern Iraq from the 32nd parallel northwards to the 33rd parallel yesterday, bringing it to within 45 kilometres from Baghdad.

Before the expansion was enforced, Iraq pulled out around 30 tactical fixed-wing aircraft from the south of the country, Reuters reported from Dubai. A Western military source close to Operation Southern Watch, and that President Saddam Hussein removed the aircraft from the area "30 to 90 minutes before the enforcement of the expanded zone

took effect".

Ralston said US aircraft, with some French and British planes, began surveillance of the expanded zone at 0900 GMT yesterday.

Ralston's declaration contrasted with statements by French Foreign Ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt, who said in Paris that no French planes had overflown Iraq in the past few days. France has opposed the cruise missile strikes.

Asked if France would take part in policing the new zone, Rummelhardt said that would be an "American decision," adding: "We are studying the implications."

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, speaking during a visit to Liechtenstein, warned the United States of possible "catastrophic consequences" if it continued raids against Iraq.

Clinton's deputy security chief, Sandy Berger, was cautious about whether the bombing was over. "I would not either rule in or rule out further strikes," he said.

In Iraq, Saddam chaired a meeting of his

air defence forces and army leadership in what seemed to be a review of Iraqi options in defying the exclusion zones. Saddam said after the first US attack on Tuesday that he would no longer respect the no-fly zones in either the south or the north of the country, and ordered his army to shoot down any allied planes entering Iraqi airspace.

Iraq's official newspapers affirmed that Baghdad would ignore restrictions on Iraqi flights. "From today there are no more imaginary parallel lines," declared *Babel*, which is run by Hussein's son, Uday.

The prospect of a conflict over the no-fly zones followed an assault by Iraqi troops on the Kurdish city of Arbil in the north and US retaliation with cruise missiles.

Speaking shortly before the second volley of missiles was launched, Clinton said the military response was aimed at ending "a broad pattern of violence and recklessness by Saddam against the Kurds, against other ethnic minorities, [and] against Iraq's neighbours."

Addressing a cheering audience at a meet-

ing of the National Guard Association, Clinton said: "Our objectives... are limited but our interests are clear: to demonstrate once again that reckless acts have consequences; to reduce Saddam's ability to strike out again at his neighbours, to increase America's ability to prevent future acts of violence and aggression."

In addition to France and Russia, China and Spain objected to the first attack and Saudi Arabia refused to allow Saudi-based US planes to take part in the assault. The fact that Britain, Germany and Japan applauded Clinton's action did little to disclaim the conclusion that five years after the Gulf War the anti-Saddam coalition is finished.

With the presidential election just two months away, early indications were that Americans supported Clinton's moves against Saddam. Seventy-three per cent said they approved of the way Clinton was handling the situation, as nearly 8 out of 10 Americans approved of the first missile attack, according to an ABC News poll released late on Tuesday. (see p.4)

## Fateful encounter

ISRAELI Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met for the first time yesterday, opening the way for the resumption of the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

The meeting, held at the Erez crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip, began with a Netanyahu-Arafat handshake so brief that photographers had to ask them to repeat it, Reuters said. It ended, however, on a note of optimism, with both sides declaring their commitment to peace, and more significantly, with Netanyahu affirming his determination to honour Israel's commitments under past peace agreements with the Palestinians.

Speaking before a joint press conference held after his meeting with Arafat, Netanyahu said both sides had agreed to "reiterate our commitment to the interim agreement [on Palestinian self-rule] and to carry out its implementation."

Arafat, expressing a similar sentiment, declared: "I would like to emphasise once again our commitment to cooperation with Israel in accordance with agreements signed."

The meeting, however, seems to have done little beyond bringing the two leaders together for the first time and agreeing on further negotiations. Netanyahu would not give any date for Israel's long-delayed troop redeployment from the West Bank town of Hebron. Asked for a specific date for the troop redeployment previously agreed upon between the two sides, the Israeli prime minister said: "They'll be discussed as I said in the steering committee."

For their part, the Palestinians say that in the steering committee they will only discuss implementation — and not modification — of the agreement regarding Hebron.

Summing up the aims of the summit, Sach Erkik, the top Palestinian negotiator, said before the meeting, "I hope we can lay down the mechanisms through which we will be able to proceed with all our negotiations... and carry out the implementation of the interim agreements [on Palestinian self-rule]." (see pp.2&4)



The Nile flood continues: the water level behind the Aswan High Dam has increased by a daily average of 10 centimetres in the last few days, measured by a row of stone pillars on the bank of Lake Nasser

photo: Nour Sobhi

## Biggest war games ever

The armed forces begin a week-long exercise on Sunday, described as their biggest ever, and featuring simulated battles along all the national borders.

Land, air and naval forces will take part in the manoeuvres, codenamed Badr-96, which will climax with a night-and-day offensive across the Suez Canal into the Sinai Desert, a military source told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Any action in the council would be based on Resolution 688, adopted in 1991, which condemned the repression of Iraqi minorities at the end of the Gulf War, but deliberately excluded the use of force. The Security Council has maintained economic sanctions on Iraq since its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, during regular reviews conducted every 60 days.

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## In favour of the accused

**Awad El-Morr**, chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, examines the Constitutional requirement to enforce statutes most favourable to the accused

In case No 12 for the 13th judicial year, decided the 7 November 1992, the Court had to decide the invalidity or otherwise of ministerial decision No 238 (1986), issued in reliance on Article 1 of the decree Law No 95 (1945), under which the minister of supplies was authorised to take measures necessary to restrict the production, circulation or consumption of any commodity. The Court observed that that decree law was designed to ensure the continuous flow of food supplies together with their fair distribution and equitable transfer from one area to another. To this end the minister was empowered to impose penalties inferior to those prescribed by the decree law in cases of the violation of measures he may take in furtherance of its

The sequence of events demonstrates that the challenged decision proscribed the possession of food — specified in a list which included frozen, preserved and dried fruits of whatever kind — for commercial purposes, or dealings in supplies. However, this decision was subsequently repealed by decision No 52 (1991) which narrowed down the scope of incrimination. On the 30 January 1992, decision No 87 (1992) entirely decriminalised previously penalised acts, thus rendering their commission within the bounds of law.

The petitioner claimed that the challenged decision [No 238 (1986)] imposed punishments that contravened Article 66 of the Constitution which provides that no crime or penalty shall be prescribed except within the limits outlined by law. In denying this claim the Court noted the plain language of the article which clearly indicates that crimes are not necessarily created by law: suffice they be established within its prescribed limits, thus entitling the executive branch to outline certain aspects of incrimination and punishment.

Regulations of this kind are not linked with powers delegated to the executive under Article 108 of the Constitution or attached to its mandate under Article 144 thereof in respect of executive regulations detailing legal provisions in force.

In fact, Article 66 of the Constitution does not entitle the legislative branch to entirely renounce its power to delineate crimes and prescribe their penalties, but relies on the executive branch for the determination of certain of their aspects, as did the challenged ministerial decision.

As a consequence of that decision, the Court ruled, satisfied constitutional requirements.

It should be noticed, the Court went on, that despite the validity of that decision, it was thereafter amended by decision No 52 for the year 1991 which exempted tourism establishments and hotels in need of the proscribed commodities along with factories using them for manufacturing, and not for commerce, from the prohibitions contained in the earlier decision.

On the 30 June 1992 decision No 87 was enacted repealing — as from its publication in the official gazette — the challenged decision and therefore rendering legal the possession of and all transactions in these commodities, thus mandating its application in regard to the standing criminal charges, being most favourable to the accused.

In reaching this conclusion, the Court emphasised that under Article 187 of the Constitution, laws are to be applied on the date assigned for their enforcement. The retroactive effect of a law is impermissible except by a specific provision endorsed by the majority of the members of the People's Assembly, with the proviso that in no case may criminal statutes sustain retrospective application.

The Court observed that the idea behind the non-retroactive effect of criminal statutes is to compel the legislature not to penalise acts which were — on their commission — within the bounds of law, or to substitute an aggravated punishment for a lesser one.

Indeed, the non-enforcement of retrospective criminal statutes limits the power of the legislature to unduly infringe on personal freedom and reinforces the principle of the legality of crimes and punishments, a principle which should not be placed alone but which supplements a clear-cut rule which requires enforcing statutes most favourable to the accused as from their issuance.

This rule, which applies retrospectively in the accused's favour, enables the accused to benefit from a legislative provision which, after the commission of a crime, eliminates or reduces a punishment that was attached thereto.

Indeed, the application of statutes most favourable to the accused as from their adoption, implicates the fact that no social advantage could be obtained from imposing a punishment that has become immaterial or burdensome under the new statute.

Though the Constitution contains no reference to the mandatory application of statutes most favourable to the accused, the linkage of this principle with the preservation of personal freedom dictated by Article 41 of the Constitution is beyond doubt.

Concomitant to the prohibition against the retroactive application of penal statutes restrictive of this freedom is the retrospective enforcement of other statutes cancelling or lessening restrictions thereon in recognition of the fact that prior motivations, which underlined the adoption of the old statute, are now opposed by new societal aspirations and therefore to be given their due effect.

Obviously, whenever a new statute abrogates penal restrictions already laid down by another statute, those incarcerated or detained pursuant to its application must be promptly released.

The Court maintained that claiming that enforcement of the new statute endangers public order deserves no attention and serves no legitimate interest since the exigencies of that order require their adaptation to societal needs.

The Court also examined decision No 87 for the year 1992 which entirely repealed the challenged decision, and pointed out that the new regulation was not confined to a specified period but sought to be applied apart from a fixed duration. This decision was inspired by the State's commitment to abandon old policies reflecting centralised control of economic resources and facilities. The new decision, the Court ruled, acknowledged that the dominant attributions allocated to the public sector led to the denial of the free-market system along with its requisite instrumentalities, resulting in a fading private sector, decaying personal incentives and a deteriorating economic situation which failed to meet pressing societal needs.

Therefore, the Court ordered, the latter decision should prevail over the challenged one, due to its furtherance of the tributes of development, coupled with the abolition of undue restrictions on freedom.

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## Cairo tightens the screws

This week Cairo's warning to Israel became explicit: honour your Oslo commitments or say good-bye to the regional economic summit, scheduled for next November. **Douaa El-Bey reports**

Sunday, Mousa said: "It is inconceivable that the economic conference will be held before a withdrawal from Hebron. This is impossible and unthinkable."

Levy, who was visiting Egypt for the first time, held a two-hour meeting with President Mubarak and also had talks with Mousa.

Following the talks, Mousa emphasised that Egypt was not interested in words, but in progress on the ground and the implementation of agreements.

"I have heard today [Sunday] Mr Levy say that he expected progress in the discussions under way with the Palestinians. Egypt is not aware of the details of these discussions. If progress is achieved, we will consider this as a [good] sign. But it will not be enough, we will wait and see," Mousa said.

He was referring to Levy's expectations of a breakthrough between the Israelis and Palestinians at secret meetings held in Jerusalem while he was visiting Cairo.

Levy told reporters: "We hope to reach an agreement today [Sunday] between the representatives of the Israeli government and the representatives of the Palestinian authority. If the two parties reach an understanding, then there will be an agreement to-day."

Although no agreement was announced at the end of the Jerusalem meetings, expectations were running high that the long-anticipated summit between Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat would eventually be held.

Addressing a joint news conference with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy in Alexandria on

The meetings, chaired by Netanyahu's chief adviser Dore Gold and Arafat's top aide, Mahmoud Abbas, failed to reach agreement over the Israeli redeployment in Hebron. Israel's six-month closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the opening of a Palestinian airport in Gaza.

At the joint news conference, Mousa criticised the Likud government's policy of expanding Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. "The building of settlements is a very serious mistake and constitutes a serious blow to the peace process," Mousa said.

When Levy denied that Israel was confiscating lands for building new settlements, Mousa asked reporters to put his words on record. "I want you to take note of what the foreign minister said — that Israel will not confiscate any more land. This is very important because it represents a noticeable progress in the peace process."

Adel El-Saffi, first under-secretary at the Foreign Ministry, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the success of the economic cooperation conference was impossible as long as the peace process remained deadlocked. "The conference is part of a package deal which is facing a crisis; how can the part succeed when the whole is obstructed?" he asked.

"Without peace, any economic cooperation among the Middle Eastern states is unimaginable. It was only when the peace march was initiated that we were able to consider establishing economic cooperation."

And, he added, in view of Israel's current practices

it would be difficult to imagine that the economic conference could achieve positive results. "It is better to reconsider holding this conference if the issues linked to it are left unresolved," he concluded.

According to Saffi, Levy's visit was not particularly fruitful, but had cast light on two important issues. First, Levy had promised that the coming few days would witness a move towards peace in various fields. "We'll wait and see what will come up," Saffi remarked.

Secondly, the visit had made Levy aware of the pressing time factor. Saffi stressed that "the Arabs will not accept the obstruction of the peace process".

Levy's visit had also given him the opportunity to listen to the Egyptian viewpoint on the various peace tracks — the Palestinian-Israeli, Syrian-Israeli, and Lebanese-Israeli — and the prospects of regional cooperation and bilateral relations, Saffi added.

There was support for the Egyptian position from Arab League Secretary-General Emad Abdel Meguid. He called for progress towards a comprehensive peace as a means of ensuring the success of the economic cooperation conference. "The conference calls for serious steps to set up a comprehensive peace in the region; otherwise the prospects for the success of the third economic conference are slight," Abdel-Meguid said at the opening of a diplomatic shift in high gear, Mubarak held separate talks over the telephone with Netanyahu and Arafat, discussing the Israeli-Palestinian stand-off. Mousa also spoke to Arafat and Osama El-Baz, the president's political adviser, met with Hassan Asfour, a member of the Palestinian legislative council.

Mousa travelled to Oslo yesterday to discuss ways of breaking the Palestinian-Israeli deadlock with Norwegian officials. (See p. 4)

## Liberal party fracas

Disension within the Liberal Party, led by Mustafa Kamel Murad, exploded into the open last week as rival factions vied to throw each other out of the party amidst scuffling and exchanges of insults and accusations.

Locked in the confrontation were Murad loyalists, opposed by a rebel group led by Mustafa Bakri, chief editor of the party's newspaper, *Al-Ahbar*. The dispute centred on Murad's decision to dismiss Bakri. Not only did Bakri refuse to relinquish his post, he also convened an extraordinary party "congress" which dismissed Murad from the party's chairmanship and appointed Bakri temporarily in his place. The crisis was only defused when the prosecution authorities ordered that control over the party and its newspaper should rest with Murad.

The conflict erupted last Thursday, when Murad dismissed Bakri from his post as chief editor and appointed Salah Qabdaya, a veteran of *Al-Ahbar* newspaper, in his place. The reason given was that Bakri had violated party policy.

As rumours circulated that a new chief editor would be taking over, Bakri called Murad "and asked him if what I was hearing was true. He dismissed the rumours as nonsense and praised the achievements of the newspaper. Soon afterwards, I realised that his words were a big lie," Bakri said.

According to Bakri, the dismissal "was the last thing I expected, especially as Murad had been praising the newspaper's editorial policy just two days earlier."

As rumours circulated that a new chief editor would be taking over, Bakri called Murad "and asked him if what I was hearing was true. He dismissed the rumours as nonsense and praised the achievements of the newspaper. Soon afterwards, I realised that his words were a big lie," Bakri said.

He claims that the real reason for his dismissal was his opposition to Murad's attempts to forge a coalition with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. He alleges that in return for the Brotherhood paying back Murad's bank debts — to the tune of £64 million — the outlawed organisation was to be allowed to set the party's policy.

Raghib Hemeida, the party's secretary-general and a Murad supporter, rejected Bakri's claim as "sheer lies". The only reason for dismissing Bakri, Hemeida said, was that he had violated the party's liberal policies and turned the newspaper into a Nasserist mouthpiece.

The Liberal Party has had links with the Islamists in the past. It forged a tripartite alliance with the Brotherhood and Ibrahim Shukri's Labour Party in 1987. The rapprochement was reflected by the party's newspaper at the time. But shortly before last November's parliamentary elections, the Liberal Party changed tack and attempted to project a liberal platform once again, leading many to believe that the coalition had been disbanded. Bakri, originally a Nasserist, was appointed as the party's deputy chair-

man and the newspaper's chief editor nearly two years ago.

A majority of *Al-Ahbar*'s reporters took Bakri's side and joined the protest sit-in at the newspaper's offices on Thursday. The group issued statements describing the sacking as a conspiracy to turn the newspaper into a mouthpiece for the Muslim Brotherhood. Several acts of violence were reported when a group of Murad loyalists attempted to make their way into the newspaper and were turned back by Bakri's supporters.

Murad reacted by filing a complaint with the prosecutor general, accusing Bakri and his supporters of causing damage to the party's headquarters and holding workers at the newspaper's printing press hostage, threatening them with knives and pistols.

Summoned for interrogation, Bakri denied the charges. He claimed that his dismissal was illegal, citing a contract signed with Murad,

The pro-Bakri "congress" has sent its resolutions to the Political Parties Committee — an affiliate of the Shura Council — which will decide who the legal party leader is.

But in the meantime, Bakri's revolt appeared to have been quashed when prosecution authorities ruled in Murad's favour, ordering that the party's Cairo headquarters, in Abdin, and the newspaper's offices, in Hadayek El-Kobra, be turned over to him. After the decision on Saturday, both buildings were immediately cordoned off by security forces to prevent further friction.

Tension ran high at the *Al-Ahbar* offices. Most reporters had taken Bakri's side, and now feared that they would be dismissed by the new chief editor. At 4pm, Murad and his entourage arrived, together with security men, who had been commissioned to enforce the prosecution's order. Murad jubilantly signed documents turning the building over to his car, as his supporters cheered. He then congratulated the new chief editor, Salah Qabdaya.

"The crisis is over," Murad said, declaring that work would continue normally at the newspaper and in the party, although the two buildings would be closely guarded for the next few days "as a precautionary measure".

"Now it's clear that Bakri's allegations that he has government backing have proved to be nonsense." Murad loyalists Hemeida commented after the prosecution authorities' decision.

Qabdaya told *Al-Ahram Weekly* on Monday that the newspaper would "abide by the party's liberal policy, which has previously been violated." He promised that none of the newspaper's editorial staff would be dismissed.

Qabdaya was the first chief editor of *Al-Ahbar*, taking up the post when the newspaper made its debut in 1977 as a weekly. He was dismissed in 1978, on Sadat's orders.

Meanwhile, prosecution authorities are investigating a complaint filed by Talaat Sadat, nephew of the late president, accusing Bakri and Ahmed Fikri, a reporter for *Al-Ahbar*, of defaming Mrs Sadat.

On 19 August the newspaper published a feature story criticising the performance of civil servants at birth registration offices. The writer had obtained a copy of a birth certificate bearing the name of Sheriff, a baby allegedly born in July 1996. The name of the reporter was registered as the father and the mother's square contained the maiden name of Jihan Sadat, Jihan Sufwat Raouf.

The reporter revealed at the end of the story that the certificate contained false information that he had bribed a civil servant at the birth registration office to write it, and that he had used Mrs Sadat's name to show how public figures could be unwittingly involved.

Four days later, Bakri published an apology to Mrs Sadat, emphasising that no offence was intended and making it clear that he was absent from the newspaper when the article was published.

At a meeting on 27 August, the Press Syndicate's council condemned Fikri's story and said both he and Bakri would be questioned for publishing it.

## Private universities launched

Enrolment has started at three new private universities in the run-up to their first academic year, which begins next month. **Rania Khalaf reports**

Students willing to pay fees of up to LE25,000 a year are currently enrolling at three new privately-run universities, whose opening was sanctioned by the government earlier this summer. Registration is under way at Misr International University, the University of Modern Sciences and Sixth of October.

The government also approved the establishment of a fourth, the University of Science and Technology, but in the absence of press advertisements announcing registration or the names of new construction work, including laboratories and workshops, has been completed on the university site.

Enrolment at Sixth of October began on 3 September. Although the law regulating private universities stipulates that a student should have scored 55 per cent of total marks in the *shameya amma*, they decided to remove Murad from the party's leadership, and appointed Bakri as acting party chairman in addition to his post as chief editor.

The "congress" also resolved to oppose the coalition with the Brotherhood or any other illegal group, to review the policies of the party's 19 publications and stop "subletting" them to other political groups — as happens at present. It also decided to investigate several party leaders, including Hemeida, for alleged financial malpractice.

Murad dismissed the "congress" and its resolutions as a "silly joke, unworthy of comment. The congress was illegal because those who attended were not party members." Murad loyalists, led by the party's standing council, met on Saturday to show support for Murad as the Liberals' "legitimate leader".

Concern has also been expressed that professors would be lured away from the state system by the high salaries offered at the private universities. But Salah Zaki, a professor of architecture at Al-Azhar University, who is also dean of the Faculty of Engineering at Misr International University, argued that there was, in fact, a surplus of professors at the state universities, so the new universities would simply provide more teaching jobs in Egypt, enabling professors to remain in the country.

The new universities will be indirectly supervised by the Supreme Council of Universities. But it is not yet clear whether the diplomas they hand out will be recognised by the government.

Ahmed Ismail, who scored 71 per cent in the *shameya amma*, has nevertheless applied to join Misr International University, because he was not sure he would be accepted by a state university. "It is risky to enrol at this university before we know how serious it is," he conceded. But he added: "At least, I think it will be better than any state university."

The new private universities will be competing with the long-established American University in Cairo (AUC). It would, El-Rashidi acknowledged, be "extremely difficult" for the new universities to compete with AUC, which "has a great history in our educational life". However, he said, some students would favour the new universities because their fees are lower.

Kalabsha is one of the few villages established by the Nile, situated in the north of the country to cultivate land included in the Nubian farms.

There, the people live in mud houses, and the water is very salty. Now, elsewhere, there are new agricultural areas, and the people are moving to them. "Now we are

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# Water not quite everywhere

The rapid rise in the level of Lake Nasser during the month of August was the result of an exceptional season of heavy rains in the Ethiopian Highlands, the main source of the Nile. The rains will almost certainly result in an unusually large flood that could bring the Nile discharge to 100 billion cubic metres. While such flood levels are not unprecedented in the 20th century they are extremely rare. The last comparable flood occurred in 1968, after many years of drought which had seen the water reserves of Lake Nasser drop alarmingly. In three months of 1968, however, the level of the lake was raised by some 17 metres. This year, however, the lake is already high and so the expected flood, for the first time, is likely to fill the reservoir completely and cause it to overflow its embankments.

The Nile flood is a seasonal phenomenon, following on from the monsoon rains of the Ethiopian Highlands from where the three Nile tributaries, the Sobat, the Blue Nile and the Atbara, converge. During flood time these tributaries account for close to 80 per cent of the total amount of water that comes to Egypt during any single year. Flood levels, and the ultimate discharge of the river, are thus determined by rainfall in the Ethiopian Highlands which varies from year to year.

During the 20th century the discharge of the river has fluctuated from as low as 40 billion cubic metres in 1913 to as high as 117 billion cubic metres in 1917. The average amount of water carried by the river during the first half of the century was 84 billion cubic metres while during the latter half of the century it has fallen to 78 billion cubic metres.

The rains of the Ethiopian Highlands are part of the great monsoonal front system that affects all Africa's Sahel (the belt which extends across the continent of Africa from Ethiopia and Eritrea in the east to Senegal in the west). In years of heavy rainfall the front extends northwards affecting large areas of the desert and activating many of its dry wadis which ultimately debouch their water into the Nile. It is these additional quantities of water that raise the discharge of the river to exceptionally high levels.

Were the supply of the river to depend only on the three Ethiopian tributaries, its discharge could never have reached the 100 billion cubic metre mark since the amount of water these tributaries carry is limited by the shape of their channels. There is a limit to the amount of water they can carry, after which the water escapes by overflowing the embankments, spilling over the flood plain and as a consequence not reaching Egypt.

The disasters that a high flood can bring to Ethiopia and the Sudan are enormous indeed. In 1968 the high floods overwhelmed the tiny towns on the flood plains around Khartoum, most of whose inhabitants were refugees from either the drought or civil war. For many years prior to 1968 the flood plain was dry and seemingly a safe place to inhabit. It looks increasingly likely that a similar disaster will befall Khartoum this year.

For the people of the Sahel region, whose livelihood depends almost totally on agriculture, the heavy rains of 1996 will be a source of rejoicing. For the governments of the region the news that the rivers are full and the ground water reservoirs replenished must come as a relief after long years of drought had wreaked havoc on fragile economies.

In Sudan the people of the south will not feel the effects of the rains, while those in the western provinces of Kordofan and Darfur as well as in the Nuba mountains or the Eastern Desert will benefit from

**Eminent geologist Rushdi Said examines the reasons behind, and likely consequences of, the unprecedented 1996 flood**



**"The [Aswan High] dam will shield Egypt from the ravages of the high flood just as it has shielded the country from the consequences of two decades of low rainfall... It would be difficult to conceive of a modern state living under the threat of being washed away every few years"**

the rains. Inhabitants of the banks of the tributaries and the main Nile, however, will suffer enormously. The river will overflow its embankments in these reaches and will overwhelm many villages and towns. The Gezira fertile plains, occupying the triangle between the Blue and White Niles, will face ruined crops. The flood will also cause great damage to the dams along the river, especially the Rosetta dam which will have to trap the large numbers of tree trunks and boulders that the flood is expected to dislodge from the Ethiopian mountain slopes. Such an onslaught is likely to ruin the dam's equipment and its power plant. The flood is also expected to carry unusually large amounts of silt that will be deposited in the dam's reservoir, filling in the bed and reducing its capacity at a far faster rate than usual. The potential dangers are great, and it is good that the Egyptian Government has offered to aid the people and government of Sudan during these trying times.

Had it not been for the High Dam, which will block the waters of the flood and store them for future use in its reservoir, similar disasters or even worse could have befallen the Egyptian people. The dam will shield Egypt from the ravages of the high flood just as it has shielded the country from the consequences of two decades of low rainfall during which the quantity of water reaching Aswan has been consistently less than Egypt needs. The benefit that the dam brings to Egypt by protecting it from the hazards of high floods is sufficient in itself to justify its building; it would be difficult to conceive of a modern state living under the threat of being washed away every few years.

Prior to the building of the High Dam high floods were frightening and awesome events. They became even more so after the intro-

duction of the system of perennial irrigation and the conversion of the flood plain of the river into a place teeming with people and cultivated throughout the year. Before perennial irrigation the plain was not inhabited and was inundated during flood time. It was cultivated only during the winter season after the water had receded. All this changed after the introduction of the system of perennial irrigation when the river was restricted to its channel and its embankments reinforced so that the plain could be cultivated throughout the year. But from that time high floods became exceptionally dangerous: the breaching of the embankment and the inundation of the plain would not only ruin the crops but would also inundate entire villages and destroy homes.

In 1996 the only part of Egypt which will be affected by the flood will be the Lake Nasser area. The rise in the level of the lake will destroy all structures that were illegally built below the contour 178 metres above sea level.

The 1996 flood is expected to be one of the largest this century, and although it may not be as large as the 1968 flood it will have a greater impact on the lake and its environs since it comes when the reservoir is almost full. The 1968 flood replenished the reservoir and saved Egypt and the Sudan from considering reductions in their share of water. In contrast the 1996 flood comes to an almost full reservoir; it will not only fill it completely but will cause it to overflow its embankments for the first time. But the spillway water will not be directed to the Egyptian Nile as had been planned in the original design of the dam. Instead it will be directed to the desert in the Tushki depression to the northwest of Abu Simbel.

Originally the dam was designed so that its reservoir could hold water up to 181 metres above sea level, after which excess water

would be diverted to the Egyptian Nile via a spillway that would take it to the western side of the Nile at Aswan. This plan was abandoned for fear that these additional waters would increase the velocity of the river and thus its power to erode its banks, scour its bed and cause damage to its bridges and barrages.

The original design of the dam which was prepared before the topographic maps of its anticipated reservoir area were raised, was further modified by reducing the maximum level of the reservoir from 181 metres above sea level to 178 metres to cope with the discovery of a gap in the wall of the reservoir at a height of 178 metres at Tushki village. The mouth of Wadi Tushki was one of the areas which I surveyed in the early 1960s. I reported its low level to the authorities and to Zakiya Mohamed, the Prime Minister at the time. This prompted him to hasten the completion of a detailed topographic map of the reservoir area.

Tushki, where the new spillway emanates, lies to the northwest of Abu Simbel and is a village with a considerable history. It was the site of one of the battles of the Mahdi wars when a Mahdi force, attempting to enter Egypt from the Sudan a century ago, was defeated and routed by the Egyptian army. When I was working at the site in the early 1960s the remains of the battle, including pieces of the clothes of the soldiers, were strewn all over the place.

The decision to divert the excess water above contour 178 metres to the desert and not in the Egyptian Nile was taken by the late Abu Alaa, the former Minister of Public Works, who feared that a disaster would befall Egypt if a flood with, say, the dimensions of that of 1978 (when the discharge of the river reached its maximum of 150 billion cubic metres) followed the three relatively high floods of 1974 to 1976. The amount of excess water that such a flood would bring into Egypt would be disastrous to the country's bridges and water structures. As it happened the floods that followed after 1976 were lower than usual, causing the level of the reservoir to fall gradually to 152 metres in 1987, the lowest level the lake had reached since the dam began operations. The flood of 1968 raised the level of the lake to around 170 metres where it remained, more or less, until this year's flood.

It has been suggested by many commentators that Egypt should benefit from this exceptionally high flood by directing a large amount of water into the Nile in order to wash out the pollutants accumulated during the past 20 years. I have already written on the impracticalities of such suggestions and the reasons why the release of large quantities of water into the Egyptian Nile will be disastrous, eroding the channel and the banks of the river and destroying its bridges.

The only way to clean the river is to adhere strictly to environmental laws, making sure that industrial waste is cleaned before it is discharged into the river and that no severs are allowed to discharge directly into it. The maximum that Egypt can do to benefit from the 1996 high flood is to release a small quantity of additional water that would expand the areas devoted to the cultivation of rice and other water-loving plants, and to cultivate one crop, of wheat or barley, in the Tushki depression.

Certainly the exceptional flood of this year should not give the impression that Egypt has an inexhaustible source of water in the Nile and that its water supply is abundant. The year 1996 is an exceptional year like that of which occurs very rarely in any century. Much lower floods and sparing water supplies are the norm, 1996 the exception.

## Fat year's bounty

A desert depression will be used for the first time to drain excess water accumulating behind the High Dam and officials hope to channel it into desert reclamation, reports Ghilan Shahine



In Kalabsha village by Lake Nasser, peasants tend their cattle on partly flooded land

photo: Sherif Sonbol

## 'Under the hand of God'

Apprehension and anticipation are in the air in Aswan. As the massive floods flow from the sources of the Nile in Ethiopia, workers at the High Dam and farmers around the Lake Nasser are holding their breath, but still going about their daily chores.

"We are living under the hand of God; if the Almighty wants to save us he will; if not, then it is His will," said Aida Mohamed, a resident of Kalabsha village, which has been affected by the flood. "We have been living on the banks of Lake Nasser for over four years now, and we have seen the floods inundating us before, but this year is really different."

Located 100 kilometres south of the High Dam, Kalabsha is a rural community created in 1988 by the Authority for Lake Nasser Development to allow agriculture on the banks of the lake.

Aida's is one of about 25 families that came to Kalabsha from different governorates in the north and south of the country to "cultivate the new land".

Included in the community are some Nubian families. "My family used to live around this area before the High Dam was built and we had to be rehoused elsewhere," said Mohamed Ismail. "Now we are coming back."

Kalabsha is one of about a dozen similar villages established by the Authority for the Development of Lake Nasser. "We have fertile soil and we want to increase the area under cultivation in Egypt, so we allocated this land to interested farmers, gave them good tools and provided them with technical aid to start new agricultural communities by the side of the lake," explained Hamdi Tolba, chairman of the Authority for the Development of Lake Nasser.

According to Tolba, the programme, implemented in cooperation with the World Food Programme of the United Nations Development Programme, aims at cultivating 150,000 feddans. So far only 22,000 feddans have been cultivated by families like Aida's.

"When I came here with my husband and my three children I was aware that we would be living and farming tightly

in a close encounter in Aswan," Dima Ezzat was on the scene

opium highlands.

"But it should not be viewed as a threat at all," said Mina Iskandar, chairman of the High Dam Authority. "The builders of the High Dam anticipated this kind of flooding because it is not a new phenomenon, and they built the dam to be able to cope with these situations."

The main body of the High Dam is a solid wall that towers 111 metres above the core and a curtain extending 180 metres under the core to meet the bedrock underneath the river. The main body of the dam holds back the Nile waters to form the world's largest man-made lake, Lake Nasser. The lake stretches 500 kilometres south of the dam and has a width averaging 10 kilometres south of the High Dam.

"People who did not live in the days before the construction of the High Dam cannot possibly imagine what it was like. It used to be catastrophic, with such heavy floods. Entire villages were washed away and large fields were ruined. It would have cost us millions of pounds every year to remedy the damage of such annual floods," he said.

The dam could cope with water that is 183 metres above the level of the Mediterranean, which is about 98 metres above the level of the bottom of the river [in Aswan]," Iskandar explained. So far the water level has not reached 180 metres above the level of the sea.

"But we are not going to leave it to reach this high," Iskandar said. When the water reaches 176 metres above sea level, the water will be channelled into the Tushki spillway, dug in 1981 at 250 kilometres south-west of the High Dam. This spillway can accommodate about 120 billion cubic metres of water. According to Iskandar, "this is as much as

the water stored in Lake Nasser."

Iskandar is expecting that the Tushki spillway will be used for the first time ever before the end of September.

"This water will not be wasted at all," he affirmed. For one thing it could help starting more bank-side agriculture in the four lakes that water will be channelled into from the Tushki spillway. "These lakes are in the zone of the New Valley, and President Mubarak is very keen on starting a new agricultural zone in this area, so perhaps we will be building villages like those on the banks of the Lake Nasser soon," Iskandar said. Also, a good portion of the waters going to the Tushki spillway will re-fill the New Valley's major underground water-well in make-up for the years when the Nile floods were very weak.

Meanwhile, in cope with the excess water, Iskandar has ordered the opening of a small spillway a few kilometres south of the High Dam.

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The construction of the High Dam began in the early 1960s and took about a decade to be completed. Egypt had to go through a bitter struggle with the Western states, which tried to abort the project by influencing the World Bank to refuse the funds necessary for the construction. In 1956, President Gamal Abdel-Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal to raise funds for the project. Britain, France and Israel reacted by launching a war against Egypt. But in the end the Egyptians built the dam, which was officially opened in July 1970. Since then, the High Dam has saved Egypt from the destruction that used to be caused by heavy flooding and the drought that could be caused by weak floods.

The annual flooding of the Nile has been raising the water level behind the Aswan High Dam by an average of 10 centimetres per day, bringing Lake Nasser's level to a record high of 175.48 metres this week.

While this is the highest recorded water level in the lake since the High Dam was built in 1970, according to Abd El-Hadi Radi, the minister of public works and water resources, the water level is expected to continue rising until it reaches 179.2 metres by the end of October.

Officials are optimistic that this rise will be beneficial to Egypt, and used the opportunity to heap praise on the High Dam. But others also expressed their concern that it could be dangerous to Sudan. Moreover, while some geologists expressed fear that flooding could cause tremors in the Aswan region, this claim was brushed aside by many as being unfounded.

The flooding and the increase in the water level, said Mina Iskandar, chairman of the High Dam Authority, means that Egypt, for the next seven years, will be able to draw its annual share of 55.5 billion cubic metres of water, even if subsequent annual floods are low. As a result of the flooding, the volume of water in the lake has increased to 118 billion cubic metres, a figure that is expected to shoot up to 145 billion cubic metres by the end of November.

Hussein Elwan, head of the Central Directorate of Water Distribution, explained that the real unprecedent event was the water level in Lake Nasser not the amount of water flowing itself.

"The natural river flow this year is less than that of 1988 but, paradoxically, the water level in Lake Nasser is higher this year," he said. The reason, he explained, is that the water level in the lake was already higher than it was in the past. When this year's flood began, the water level stood at 172.8 metres. The 1988 flood, on the other hand, came on the heels of nine lean years, which had left the lake almost empty.

The annual flood occurs in the months of August and September, and is a result of rainfall in Ethiopia. This rainfall accounts for 85 per cent of the river's yearly water flow.

The strength of the flood changes roughly every seven years, resulting in consecutive groups of seven lean and seven fat years depending on whether the increase in the water is below or above the 84 billion cubic metre average, Elwan said.

But these periods of scarcity and abundance may extend to as many as 20 years, he added.

Prior to the construction of the High Dam, the flooding posed a danger to villages and cultivated land located close to the river banks. Approximately 5,000 cubic metres of water per day was discharged into the Mediterranean. This move would also serve to "purify" the river's water in a massive flushing operation.

Officials pointed out that the annual amount discharged into the sea has dropped from 6 billion cubic metres in 1980-81 to 1.5 billion in 1990-91 and, eventually, to 0.27 billion last year. "This amount is not enough to keep the water clean," Elwan said.

Activating the Tushki depression has priority over discharging the water into the sea. The reason, Elwan explained, is that any water moving past the High Dam is deductible from Egypt's annual 55.5 billion cubic metre share. The water discharged into the sea has to go past the High Dam, but not the water channelled to the Tushki depression before it reaches the dam, he said.

Moreover, added El-Raqibawi, discharging a larger volume of water into the sea raises the flow speed in the main stream, which complicates the problem of dredging the river's bottom.

Despite the options available to minimise the danger resulting from the flooding, some geologists are concerned that the accumulation of water in Lake Nasser may trigger an earthquake similar to the one measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale that shook the Aswan region in 1981. That tremor was blamed not only on the rising water volume, but on the lake's very existence.

According to geologist Ahmed Farouk, the stricken area, about 70km northwest of the High Dam, contains many faults, the most notable of which is the Kalabsha fault.

Some geologists, Farouk said, believe that water penetrating the Kalabsha fault caused the tremor.

"Now that the lake is full, another tremor is likely to occur, but only after a long period of time," Farouk said, adding that some seismologists predict that an earthquake could happen in this region every 50 years.

"The next tremor will probably be mild because the area is now more stable," he said.

Dr Mohamed Rashad El-Qubeisi, head of the Earthquake Institute, disagreed, maintaining that another earthquake is unlikely. He said that many Egyptian and foreign experts who studied the 1981 tremor were not able to prove that it was connected to the water level in Lake Nasser.

"The area is being monitored around the clock, and none of the signs that usually precede an earthquake have been registered," El-Qubeisi said. These signs include changes in the area's temperature and subsidence water level, as well as the occurrence of some crust deformations.

Officials at the Ministry of Water Resources were concerned that the flood could cause damage in Sudan, similar to that wreaked by the 1988 inundation.

The excess water could block power generators at Al-Silsilah Dam, causing a blackout and a shortage of drinking water.

"Nothing has happened so far, and the Sudanese government is taking all the necessary precautions," Elwan said.

Radi had earlier declared Egypt's readiness to help should Sudan request assistance.

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# '91 allies split over missile strike

The Gulf War allies were divided by the American missile strikes against Iraq.

Egypt expressed concern that military developments in Iraq would escalate tension in the region and add to the sufferings of the Iraqi people. "Egypt is following developments, and the accompanying military moves, with concern," a foreign ministry spokesman said. "Egypt warns that the use of force in the north or south of Iraq would increase tension inside Iraq and in the region, and expose the lives of civilians to danger."

Foreign Minister Amr Mousa said, "The use of force will not affect the Iraqi regime but will add to the sufferings of the Iraqi people."

Mousa called for respecting the sovereignty and territorial unity of Iraq and also for implementing the food-for-oil agreement in order to alleviate the sufferings of the Iraqis.

In what appeared to be a criticism of both the Iraqi attack on Kurds in the north and the US missile strike against Iraq, Mousa said on arrival in Paris yesterday: "Egypt is against the use of force in northern or southern Iraq."

The Arab League, for its part, used a much harsher tone, condemning the American strikes as a "violation of the sovereignty of an Arab state and an intervention in its internal affairs. The use of military force will only complicate the situation and produce additional tension and instability," said Esmat Abdel-Meguid, the League's secretary-general.

A similar condemnation was made by Syria which blasted the missile raids and warned Washington that further attacks could have unpredictable consequences.

The Pentagon's announcement on the possibility of launching new operations [against

Iraq] is rejected and denounced and might lead the region to possibilities with impact in all directions," said *Al-Baath*, newspaper of the ruling Baath party.

Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani castigated both US and Iraqi leaders, calling them "demagogues" who pursue their personal interests at the expense of the Iraqi people.

"It appears that the electoral campaign in the United States is deciding the fate of other people in the world," Rafsanjani told Iranian journalists who are accompanying him on an African tour.

US President Bill Clinton "is a demagogue because he attacks Iraq just to collect votes," Rafsanjani said. "People are being victimised in a human catastrophe and international laws are trampled on."

Rafsanjani also attacked Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, saying his military offensive in Iraqi Kurdistan which led to the US raid was "also indefensible."

"Baghdad's" immature move led to an even more immature act from the United States," Rafsanjani said.

In Kuwait, the armed forces went on full alert, and were monitoring the situation closely, to face any "reckless action" by Israel such as a Scud missile attack, Defence Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah said.

But he said the border with Iraq was quiet, adding that "we are in constant contact and coordination with the international allied forces to deter any attack in the region."

The Palestinian National Authority gave nom-

inal support for Saddam Hussein, a one-time ally, but Yasser Arafat remained personally silent. "The Palestinian leadership expresses its deep concern" and calls for a halt to all military action as well as the "lifting of the blockade imposed on Iraq and its children," the PLO's news agency WAFA said in a statement.

The statement said Iraq was "defending its land" when Saddam sent his troops into the Kurdish area of northern Iraq.

Jordan expressed concern at the missile attacks and said that it will not be used as a launch pad against any Arab state or people. Amman declared support for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial unity.

America's allies, which contributed troops to the multinational force that liberated Kuwait in 1991, were divided, with Britain expressing support and France concern.

"France remains concerned by the development of the situation in Iraq," said a French foreign ministry spokesman following the second US cruise missile attack.

France earlier said the Iraqi military operations in Kurdistan were not violations of UN resolutions and that France supported Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The spokesman called for dialogue to revive the oil-for-food agreement.

British Prime Minister John Major affirmed support for the latest US missile strikes. "I have made it clear from the outset that I think he [Clinton] took the right decision — not an easy decision, a rather brave decision," Major said.

"I think it was the right decision. We have seen in the past what Saddam is capable of and

we have seen in the past the humanitarian disaster that occurred in 1991. I think it was right to make it clear to him that the rest of the world will not tolerate that sort of behaviour again," Major said.

Russia condemned the American strikes. Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said the use of force by one country without UN approval could lead to "catastrophic consequences" on the world scene and to anarchy in international relations.

Mustafa Kalmyk, head of the Turkish Parliament, who was on a visit to Cairo, told *Omayma Abel-Latif*: "We strongly denounce any use of force in northern Iraq from all parties concerned."

Kalmyk expressed his country's growing concern over the situation in Iraq and urged all sides not to take action that could further aggravate the situation. "The Americans say they intervened for humanitarian reasons," he said. "If that was the real cause of the military operations, it will show soon, but if they had any other intentions for their military action in Iraq, it would be difficult to predict how the situation will end. We hope that all sides will restrain themselves and no more bloodshed will take place because any escalation will lead to tragic consequences."

Nabil Najim, the Iraqi representative at the Arab League, told the *Weekly* the American attacks showed that the Clinton administration had no respect for the UN charter or the sovereignty and independence of other countries.

"The latest aggression is a new page in the book of American aggressions that take the form of sanctions and an air embargo," he said.

Najim insisted that the Iraqi action in the north did not violate UN resolutions. "Iraq is exercising the right to be present on any part of its land, including the north," he said.

Najim accused America of using double standards, noting that it took no action "when the Iranian or Turkish troops encroached on Iraqi sovereignty and entered Iraqi territory to fight the Kurds."

Mohamed Abdel-Jabbar, a spokesman for the Iraqi National Congress, a coalition of Iraqi opposition parties, said in a telephone interview from London that Saddam seems to have miscalculated. "He thought that if he intervened in the Kurdish region 10 weeks before the American elections, the US administration would not retaliate. But the US taught him a lesson," Abdel-Jabbar said.

And yet the American attacks were not likely to deter Saddam from taking similar action in the future, he added.

Mohamed El-Sayed Said, deputy director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, said the US had two options: either to ignore what Saddam was doing, which would encourage him to do it again, or to punish his troops for violating a safe haven. "The US opted for the second alternative, launching a minor operation against Saddam," Said said.

Although Saddam knew that his action would not go unpunished, he went ahead with it to cookey to the world the message that the Iraqi army is still well-equipped and capable of launching military operations, Said said.



**Britain expressed support; France concern; Russia condemnation and Egypt opposition. Hoda El-Bayy reviews recent reactions**

**So is the Security Council**

The UN Security Council is divided over the legitimacy of the American missile attacks inside Iraq, reports Hoda Tawfik from New York

As waves of cruise missiles struck Iraqi military targets, the Clinton Administration deserved the right to take further military actions against Iraq. But for the international community gathered at the United Nations, no legitimate UN resolution justifies these attacks. "The no-fly zones were decisions made by the leading members of the international community, the members of the coalition that defeated Saddam Hussein," said the American State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns. However, in response to critical questions about the legitimacy of UN actions, he conceded that, "There were no UN resolutions that set up those flight zones."

In effect, US President Bill Clinton is expanding the southern no-fly zone to the suburbs of Baghdad and insists on Iraqi compliance. "We expect Iraqi compliance with the no-fly zone instructions," said Defence Secretary William Perry. "We expect no flights below the 33rd parallel [otherwise] we will take appropriate actions," Perry warned.

The Clinton Administration, worried about the cool reaction of its allies, is trying to justify the strikes in terms of preventing international concern, mainly the vital flow of Gulf oil to the world. "It is not about the Kurds. The issue is not simply the Iraqi attack on the Kurdish town of Arbil. Our national interests are not tied to which party prevails in this conflict in northern Iraq. But we do have national interests including protection of the flow of oil and maintenance of stability and protecting friendly nations: Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait," added Perry.

It would also be too risky for Clinton to meddle

in the Kurdish infighting in northern Iraq because of the politically dangerous prospect of getting American troops involved and the possible loss of American lives in an election year.

Currently the American polls show a majority approval of Clinton's tough policy vis-a-vis Saddam Hussein. Even his election opponent, Republican Senator Bob Dole, expressed his support.

Congress did likewise.

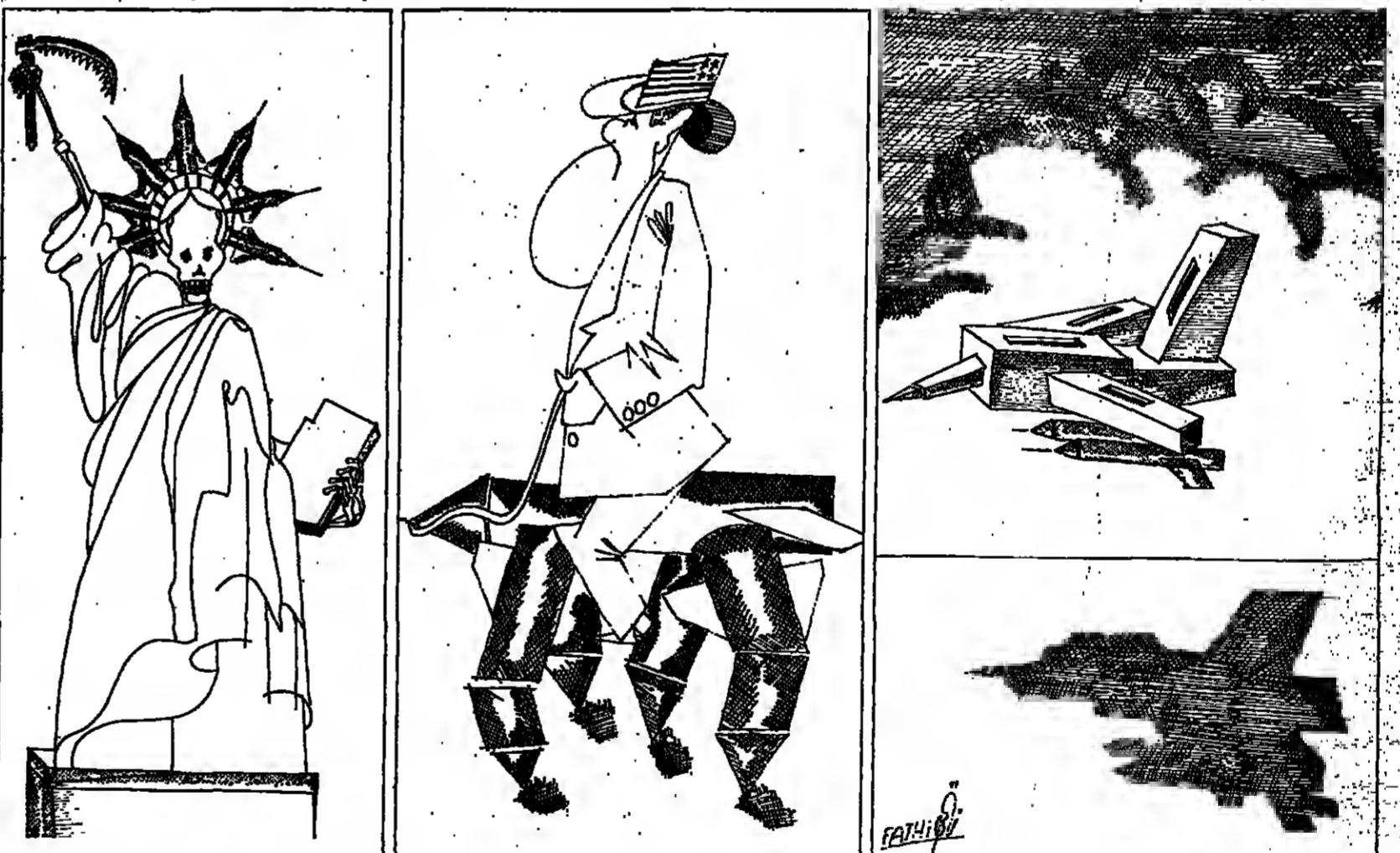
At the UN Security Council, member states are questioning the legitimacy behind the attacks on the territory of a sovereign state.

In response, President Clinton dispatched his foreign secretary, Warren Christopher, to Europe. His meetings in London, Paris and Bonn will concentrate on the situation in northern Iraq to muster support for a concerted Western action against Saddam Hussein.

Great Britain, backed by the United States, offered a Security Council draft resolution condemning Iraq's offensive against the Kurds and calling for Iraq to stop its involvement in northern Iraq.

But mention of the US attacks was conspicuously absent from the draft because the Council is divided over the issue of the legitimacy of the American action. "If we were to include that issue, there would be absolutely no common view," said a senior French official.

Additionally, the Russian delegation distributed a statement warning against violent measures, implying that they could have dangerous regional and international consequences. Unfortunately, as the Russian statement stressed, Washington has opted for a different course.



## 'Not another shifting mirage'

Egypt has finalised preparations for the third regional economic summit, but it may not be held. Nevine Khalil checks reactions to Cairo's warning

Preparations are under way for the third annual Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit (MENA III), scheduled to be held in Cairo on 12-14 November. This week the World Economic Forum, MENA's organisers, said in a statement that the summit must produce "concrete results on the ground, supported by dedication to the peace process". Anything less, it added, "could erode the credibility of the politicians concerning their commitment to regional economic cooperation."

Addressing a gathering of businessmen at the Egyptian Capital Markets and Investment Conference in Cairo on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Amr Mousa said that Egypt "is very keen [but] painfully aware that the conference can only succeed if convened in an environment [where] peace is not another shifting mirage in the expansive Middle East desert".

He emphasised that the peace that is sought is one "which would bring Israel into the Middle East family, [but] nice words are not enough. We want action and implementation of signed agreements," said Mousa.

Asked whether using economic isolation to pressure Israel would achieve the best results, Mousa told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that economic integration is being used "to promote a better life in the region", adding: "There has to be peace and from peace everything will be [resolved]."

Responding to the same question, State Min-

ister for Economic Affairs Youssef Boutros Ghali reiterated Mousa's sentiments, saying, "Using any tool for the sake of peace serves a very noble purpose."

The Egyptian business community largely concurred with the government's position, saying that business in the region has no future without stability and security. Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt Mohamed Shafiq Gabr said that in the Arab world there is "serious concern that [the conference] will be a non-summit".

"We want the summit, but we can't have it" unless there is progress on the peace track, because business relations cannot thrive without peace, he added.

"So far Israel has not produced on-the-ground results showing that it is moving towards a comprehensive peace," Gabr said. He argued that in the past few years progress on the various Arab-Israeli tracks has encouraged business, but this will end if "the peace process is stalled". Gabr also warned, "Capital will leave areas where there is no security or stability."

An alternative suggestion was offered by Lucy Duncan, an American businesswoman, who believes that Israel's non-participation in the summit would be a better course of action than cancelling or postponing the gathering. "We should tell [Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak] Netanyahu that if he won't do the right thing he

should stay out of it," she said.

Duncan said that cancelling the summit would send out a very negative message to American and European investors and might cause some to re-evaluate their plans. She warned that private capital is "both limited and competitive, [and] if anything goes wrong with this summit investors might [later] find themselves already involved elsewhere".

Gamal Moharam, an Egyptian who is chief representative of the Bank of New York, agrees that postponing the summit, although unlikely, would make it "very difficult to have the audience we want later". He observed that the way Netanyahu "is behaving can blow up the whole thing, and it will not be in our interest to let him do that".

Israeli businessmen, naturally, would like Egypt to go ahead with the summit no matter what Israeli businesswoman Enilia Mosseri believes that Egypt should take the lead to "create the new reality and the other party [Israel] will have nowhere else to go". Mosseri added that regional economic cooperation and peace should move "in parallel lines".

Palestinian Israeli businessmen, on the other hand, sympathise with the Egyptian government position but would like to see economic cooperation between Israel and the Arab countries eventually achieved.

Makram Khoury-Machool, president of the Jaf-

fa Group, a consortium of Arab Israeli private companies, said that even if the summit is postponed to allow for a better atmosphere, "what is more important is that it is held in the end."

"I understand well what is happening in the political kitchen, but it would be a mistake to cancel the summit, and I am sure that the Egyptian government will not cancel," said Khoury-Machool.

As a member of the business community in Israel, he emphasised that Israeli businessmen have openly declared their support for peace and regional cooperation. He continued that they harbour "some bitterness" towards the Netanyahu government and are pressuring it to implement the signed accords, "at the core of which lie economic and trade agreements".

Khoury-Machool complained that the present Israeli government has no economic vision for the Middle East, and if this continues it will lose out to a more visionary Labour government.

Prominent Egyptian observers also feel that regional economic cooperation is not one of Netanyahu's priorities. Nevertheless, they hope that Israel will meet Egypt's terms and that MENA III will be held as scheduled.

Egypt's prime minister during the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks in the late 1970s, Musa Khalil, told the *Weekly* that even during Netanyahu's election campaign, "economic in-

tegration was never high on his list," observing that his campaign rhetoric focused on security issues.

Osama Ghabzali Harb, political commentator and chief editor of *Al-Ahram's International Politics*, believes that Israel will have to respond to Egypt's demands, because no party to the process, particularly Israel, is willing to risk and bear the responsibility for the cancellation of the summit. He believes, however, that the cancellation of the summit would deliver "a great blow to the peace process and future regional cooperation," because progress needs to be achieved along the two tracks simultaneously.

Nonetheless, he is of the view that Netanyahu's government mainly looks towards the US and Western Europe for economic prosperity. "There is great disparity between this government's and the previous one's perspectives on regional economic ties," he said.

Some Israeli businessmen seem to share Likud's ambivalence towards economic cooperation with the Arab countries. Dov Rotman, president of Koor Peace Projects, said that, "It is more over than ever," and balance never.

However, Farid Zeineddin said, "Syria does not have anything to do with us. It is a golden opportunity for us to move forward with Lebanon and Turkey."

With regard to the peace process, he said, "It is not beyond the limits of possibility to end the war and fly the flag of peace, because the US is supporting us in this regard."

Additional reporting by Hazem Gamil

كنا من الأصل

# Turkey walks a thin line

As Turkey continues to befriend Israel through military agreements, Rasha Sand scans Arab reactions

Turkey and Israel signed their second defense deal of the year last week. According to reports, the deal covers the exchange of technical know-how and will likely pave the way for the long-delayed agreement; worth \$650 million, in which Israel has pledged to overhaul 54 Turkish F4 Phantom jets.

An earlier military agreement, signed in February, allows Israeli jets to train in Turkish airspace. This arrangement brought about strong protests from Arab countries, accusing Turkey of threatening its interests in favour of Israel's.

Neostate Erbakan, Turkey's prime minister, strongly opposed the military training accord and adopted an anti-Israeli platform during his campaign for election but toned down his objections after coming to power.

It is believed he agreed to the latest deal as a result of the pressure he faces from Turkish Foreign Minister, Tuncu Ciller, who strongly believes that Turkey will gain "economic and security benefits" from the arrangement with Israel. Erbakan was also required to take into consideration the pro-Western sympathies of Turkey's powerful military establishment.

According to reports, the military convinced Erbakan that it was in dire need of Israeli technological know-how for renovation of its equipment. The Foreign Ministry insisted that a similar arrangement with the US was impossible due to their ban on the transfer of technology.

Though equally significant, the latest agreement did not enjoy the same publicity as the first one. Turkey did not release details of the arrangement, calling it a "standard framework agreement" similar to one it has with approximately 20 other countries, including Egypt.

According to Maj Gen (retired) Ahmed Fakir, an Egyptian expert on military and strategic affairs, both military agreements with Israel are significant. He suggested that the "Turkish-Israeli military cooperation agreements square, special importance, because both countries are in possession of relatively advanced technology. He believes, however, that the first one was more dangerous and caused a more direct threat to Arab countries."

"The first agreement is a military cooperation beyond borders which allows the Israeli air force to mass in Turkish air bases and fly their aircraft in Turkish airspace. It is suspicious because Turkey has disputes with several neighbouring countries, including Iraq and Greece," he explained.

The second agreement is a military cooperation within borders and deals specifically with technology exchange. This is significant, but poses less of a threat," he added.

However, Bulent Kesimal, foreign news editor at the Turkish newspaper *Zaman*, believes that the media is most interested in surprising or unexpected events. "This, he suggests, explains the strong reaction the first agreement, as opposed to the second. "Since people are now more familiar with the issue, the media is not as interested. The Arab world was not surprised with the latest agreement and will not be with future ones," he said.

He added that the Turkish media is dominated by secular forces who oppose the policies of the Refah-True Path Party coalition government. "These media organisations will be thrilled that their propaganda results in the criticism of the Arab world," he said.

Arab nations also did not comment on the second agreement.

Abdel-Samie Zeineddin, a former Egyptian diplomat, believes that Egypt did not comment on the second agreement due to its preoccupation with the peace process. Additionally, Egypt feels more secure with the details of the deal following a meeting between President Mubarak and Turkey's President Suleiman Demirel.

With regard to Syria, Zeineddin suggests that it is now concentrating its efforts to end its water dispute with Turkey. "Syria does not want to miss the golden opportunity of having Erbakan at the head of Turkey's government," he said.

Iran, on the other hand, sympathises with Erbakan and supports his Refah-led coalition government and is therefore unlikely to criticise the agreement.

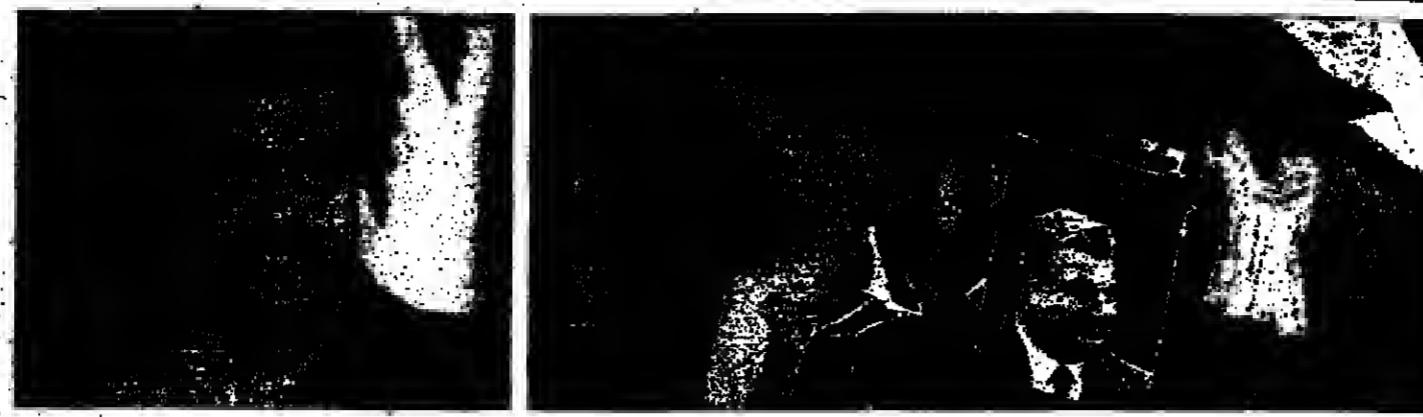
Erbakan delayed the signing of the agreement until he comes back from his tour of several Islamic countries, including Iraq.

The news of the agreement coincided with reports that Erbakan will be visiting Syria and Iraq and Ciller will be heading to Jordan. Observers believe that Erbakan is moving to absorb Arab anger and balance news of the agreement with friendly overtures toward Arab nations.

However, Fakir believes that the visits have nothing to do with the military agreement. He suggests that Turkey realises the Middle East is heading towards peace, and "Erbakan is now trying to anticipate the role Turkey can play in the region after peace is settled."

Zeineddin said that the Turks are pragmatic in general. "Erbakan's policy targets his country's national interests first," he explained.

He added that Turkey is a country surrounded by enemies, and if Erbakan is unable to resolve its problems with Islamic countries, then this will reduce the number of enemies and act as a good-will gesture to improve relations with the rest.



Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri talks to reporters after his overwhelming victory in Sunday's legislative elections in Beirut which assured him of the largest block in parliament. Meanwhile, his jubilant supporters dance and celebrate in front of his villa. Hariri's victory, however, was marred by widespread accusations of voting irregularities (photo: AFP)

## Hariri sweeps Beirut

The third round of Lebanese elections confirms the demise of any real opposition in the new parliament, amid accusations of irregularities, reports Zeina Khodir from Beirut

The battle for Beirut and its leadership has ended with Prime Minister and Beirut candidate Rafik Al-Hariri getting what he wanted. He secured enough seats in parliament to form a strong and solid bloc to push his reconstruction projects through without facing opposition.

Hariri and his coalition partners won a landslide victory. Fourteen of the 19 seats allocated to the capital in parliament were won by candidates on his "Beirut Decision" ticket. In the last two rounds of voting, seven Hariri supporters secured seats in the National Assembly. Now, the prime minister has by far the largest bloc in the new parliament.

However, the third round of elections last Sunday in the Beirut Governorate was marred by electoral abuses and alleged voting irregularities. There were reports that Hariri's election campaign team was paying voters 100,000 Lebanese pounds (US\$64) for each vote. Hariri's office denied the charges of bribery. Opposition candidates and independent observers said there were mistakes in the voters' list and cheating in ballot counting, including the prevention of representatives of opposition candidates from being present during the counting procedure. Some voters also found out, when they arrived at their polling stations, that someone else had already voted in their name.

Additionally, there were accusations that the Interior Ministry participated in the fraud. A Hizbullah deputy, Mohamed Bejjawi, who lost his seat, showed reporters dozens of voting envelopes bearing the stamp of the Interior Ministry. He said the envelopes were illegally given to Hariri's team to be filled with Hariri's voting list and handed to voters.

Hariri's main rival, Sunni Muslim ex-premier Seif Hoss, managed to win re-election but only one other member of his 13-member Salvation and Change election ticket, Mohammed Youssef Beydoun, won with him. This weakens Hoss' position in Parliament but Beydoun said that the fight will not end.

"This will not deter us from continuing our constructive opposition in Parliament," Beydoun, who won one of the two Shi'ite seats, said. "Until now, people in power have been waging a war against the opposition and many of my friends in the opposition did not win. But there are still two more rounds of elections. In the South and the Bekaa, Hizbullah is strong and it will gain seats. We may be very different from Hizbullah in our opposition but our voice will be united. The authorities are trying to weaken the opposition but other deputies will join us and I think a constructive bloc can be formed."

Many of the incumbent deputies running for re-election were defeated. Nine of them, including candidates representing Hizbullah, the Islamic Group and the pro-Syrian Sunni Al-Ahbab Organisation lost. Hizbullah has so far lost two of the eight seats it won in the 1992 polls. But it is highly possible that its candidates will win seats in the elections of the governors' of South Lebanon and the Bekaa. The Islamic Group has only managed to keep one of the three seats it currently holds and is unlikely to win any more. Both Hizbullah and the Islamic Group had cooperated in the outgoing legislature.

However, incumbent MP Najah Wakim, who is a harsh critic of Hariri and his policies, managed to win a seat. He vehemently denounced the voting irregularities, saying that the elections were a major fraud.

Wakim, along with other opposition MPs, constantly criticises the prime minister's socio-economic programme, accusing Hariri of misusing state resources in foreign debt.

Neither Hariri nor Hoss' victory came as a surprise because the real battle was between their election lists. Hariri, who headed the government for the last four years and launched a multi-billion dollar reconstruction programme, had called on the electorate to vote for his whole list and not to resort to crossing out names of candidates. But many voters were not satisfied with Hariri's coalition partners, most of whom were businessmen and newcomers on the political scene.

Hariri had said that he decided to join the race because he felt that Beirut, despite being the capital and the centre of power and the economy, was not well represented in Parliament. His purpose was to create a stronger bloc to strengthen Beirut's position in the decision-making process. As a result, during the electoral campaign, Hoss and Hariri locked horns in a verbal war. Hoss accused the premier of using his money and influence to ensure his victory and of seeking to grab all the power in Beirut.

After the election, Hoss said the Beirut voters had made their choices and explained that his election ticket did not fare well in the elections because of the low voter turnout.

According to the Interior Ministry, some 30 per cent of the 350,000 eligible voters in the capital cast their ballots. The turnout was relatively low compared to the two rounds of voting in Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon, where 45 and 40 per cent of the electorate voted, respectively.

Beydoun attributed this low turnout to the Beirut's indifference and disillusionment, caused by the alleged violations in the previous rounds of voting.

Greek Orthodox MP Bishara Metwally, who was on Hariri's election ticket and won, said the results showed the Beirut's wish for a united voice to represent Beirut.

The results of the Beirut poll clearly show that the government's aim of marginalising the opposition has been achieved. With most of the seats in the new legislature determined, it is clear that the incoming parliament is virtually free of any real opposition. And the concerted drive by authorities to contain the groups they dub as extremists, such as Hizbullah and the Islamic Group, is bearing fruit. Their representation in parliament has been truncated.

The path is now clear for Hariri to push ahead with his reconstruction drive. His plan has been criticised for not taking into account the needs of the middle class and the poor. It remains to be seen how many additional seats the opposition can win in the remaining two rounds of elections.

## Seats by democracy

Mohamed Ra'ad, a key Hizbullah figure, talked to Graham Usher about his movement's longer-term visions for Lebanon

In recent weeks, there has been a steady escalation of vitriol by supporters of Lebanon's Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the mainstream Shi'ite Amal Movement of Nabih Berri against the Shi'ite Islamic resistance movement, Hizbullah. Such rhetoric has fuelled speculation that there is a plan afoot to curb Hizbullah's representation in the next Lebanese parliament.

One week before elections are held for South Lebanon, Mohamed Ra'ad, head of Hizbullah's Political Council and candidate for South Lebanon, spoke about this attempted marginalisation and Hizbullah's electoral prospects

Hizbullah's showing so far in the Lebanese elections has been poor, with candidates from your movement losing seats in Mount Lebanon and Beirut. Do you feel, post-elections, that Hizbullah will have to reassess its future political strategy? No. We will continue to contest these and future parliamentary elections. Hizbullah believes there are important opportunities that can be exploited in parliament, despite the government's attempts to marginalise us by electoral fraud and pressure exerted on our allies.

Participation furthers our political aims in Lebanon. It was due to our decision to run for the 1992 elections that we achieved a strong presence in the government's political institutions. This strengthened our influence among the people, which is why Hariri and his allies now wish to weaken us. So we understand the importance of being inside the political institutions as well as outside them.

If we lose some seats in these elections, it won't affect much our political power. It certainly won't affect our strategic decisions over continuing the resistance to Israel's occupation in South Lebanon or our opposition to any peace treaty with Israel. We will resist any attempt to impose conditions on us vis-à-vis the national struggle against Israel.

Do you suspect Syria is behind the apparent attempts to marginalise Hizbullah in these elections?

Syria is undoubtedly aware that the government and its supporters are trying to marginalise us. It knows that in the so-called joint list presented to us by Amal we were assigned five seats in the Bekaa Valley (out of 23) and three in South Lebanon (out of 23). But Syria also knows we refused these lists. Nor has it exerted any pressure on us to accept them.

But these elections are not just a domestic Lebanese matter. Any loss of seats will be seen regionally as a weakening of Hizbullah's political weight in Lebanon. This would be true if there were genuine democracy in Lebanon. But there isn't.

Hizbullah's political strength cannot be measured by the number of members of parliament it has. Nor can any party's. The reason is obvious. In this period, Lebanon has no political stance independent from Syria. If, for instance, Syria wants peace with Israel, Lebanon will have peace with Israel — even if every one of Lebanon's 128 MP's voted against it. The reverse is also true.

Do you suspect Syria is behind the apparent attempts to marginalise Hizbullah in these elections?

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We did not refuse these lists out of self-interest. Amal's list guaranteed Hizbullah eight parliamentary seats — the same number of seats we had in the outgoing parliament. We refused the lists because we reject the whole concept of gaining positions by assignment; we want to win seats by democracy.

Beyond the elections, it is in Syria's interest to have a strong resistance in South Lebanon. It therefore also has an interest in granting that resistance a political legitimacy in Lebanon, regardless of whether the resistance has representatives in parliament.

What is Hizbullah's long-term political vision for Lebanon? Hizbullah's fundamental aim is to establish a balanced political system in Lebanon, one which ensures fair and just representation for every section of our society. We understand that our Islamist ideology cannot be imposed in Lebanon, that our beliefs will only be accepted if advocated in a democratic way. This is why, strategically, we want civil peace between all groups in Lebanon, and seek dialogue and non-violence as the means to resolve any differences between us.

So Hizbullah does not seek an Islamic republic for Lebanon?

From the moment the Islamic resistance was born in 1982, Hizbullah has never advocated an Islamic republic for Lebanon — it is Western propaganda. Nor is it just Western propaganda; it is also a lie promulgated by certain sectarian figures in Lebanon who are afraid of our growing political influence and wish to pitch Lebanon's other confessional groups against us.

Our basic position is clear: we are against and seek to abolish all forms of political sectarianism in Lebanon — whether it is Maronite, Sunni, Druze or Shi'ite sectarianism.

In the past, Hizbullah has said that its struggle to liberate South Lebanon from Israeli occupation is part and parcel of the struggle to liberate Palestine from Zionism. Is this still your position?

We do not believe freedom can be partitioned. If we have the right to liberate Lebanon from occupation, then other peoples must have the same right to liberate themselves from occupation. So it is a matter for the Palestinian people, in other words, the current de facto situation does not alter the right in South Lebanon or our opposition to any peace treaty with Israel. We will resist any attempt to impose conditions on us vis-à-vis the national struggle against Israel.

Our view is that Israel's presence in Palestine is illegitimate. But we are Lebanese. It is for the Palestinians to decide how they will exercise their right to resist occupation. Should they decide to continue the struggle against Israel, we will support them, in ways appropriate to their situation and appropriate to ours.

In other words, liberating Palestine is the business of the Palestinians, liberating Lebanon the business of the Lebanese...

You may interpret my answer any way you wish. Once Israel has withdrawn from Lebanon, let us discuss the Palestine question again.

## Khartoum's answer to Beijing

Margot Badran attended a women's conference in Khartoum and came away in support of the women and against the organisers

"To address men and women separately is not Islamic," I speak as a Muslim human being," Egyptian writer Safinaz Kasim told the opening plenary of the International Women Forum in Khartoum. This sentiment marks off Islamists from secular Muslims. Yet, Moslims are gendered as the composition of the forum itself indicated. Indeed, women were reminded of their specificity in the repeated accolades to the exalted nature of their maternal roles.

Some 150 women from more than 40 countries, and a handful of men, assembled in Friendship Hall in the Sudanese capital from 31 July through 3 August in response to a call from Khartoum. That the International Women Forum received the highest state backing was in no doubt. National Islamic Front (NIF) leader Hassan Al-Turabi gave a rousing welcoming address to the women, addressing them to play their multiple roles. His wife, Wisal Al-Mahdi, through the International Organisation for Muslim Women (IOMW) she founded in 1989 (the year the present government took over) spearheaded the planning of the conference. The organisation collected 360 million Sudanese pounds (about a quarter of a million dollars).

The only other Sudanese women's organisation represented at the conference was the government-affiliated Sudan Women's Union. The participants came mainly from Muslim non-governmental organisations (NGO), some from nationally affiliated women's unions, and others attended as individuals.

At the top of the agenda was the creation of an international Islamic association for women. The meeting occurred one year after the United Nations Conference and NGO Forum in Beijing. It coincided with host country's accelerated bid for international Islamic consolidation.

The Khartoum gathering was unique in the history of political Islam. Mobilisation and political participation of women were central tenets at this international Muslim meeting. A conference trope was the seamless circle of the political, economic, social, and cultural within Islam. As Muslims, women's positioning must be firmly within this Islamic circumference.

Zeineddin said that the Turks are pragmatic in general. "Erbakan's policy targets his country's national interests first," he explained.

but there was no consensus among the women on the nature of the state and society. If "committed" Muslim women from countries where Islam is the predominant or only religion, advocate an Islamic state, those from countries where Islam is a minority religion favour a secular state. Nenina Vasharashvili, general-secretary of the Union of Women's Associations of Bosnia and Herzegovina who describes her country as a "tiger skin" with Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox "stripes," supports a secular state. Women from South Africa, India, Azerbaijan, Romania, Bulgaria, and from Western countries also advocate a secular state and society.

Moreover, there was no consensus as to whether Muslim minorities should be governed by separate Islamic personal status codes or by a single national law. Fatima Noordien, an activist in the Muslim Youth Movement in South Africa and on the Gender Desk of the Clement Main Road Masjid in Cape Town, said that she and the majority of the Muslim community — who were carefully canvassed — do not favour instituting a Muslim personal status code in their new country. Indian delegate and educationist Nafeesa Kalem, on the other hand, supports the continued existence of a separate Muslim Personal Status Code in her country.

Islamic feminism, it also became clear, was not uniform. There was going to be a vibrant and colourful religious culture with space for song and dance. This was evident alone in the sundry entertainments laid on for the delegates. An all-woman band sported red jackets and trousers and red visor caps over yellow veils played rousing tunes. A more traditional group of dancers from the Red Sea hills wearing headresses spangled with gold coins also performed. During one of the many bus rides to sessions and special events, when a group of women started to sing, a black-clad delegate from America objected, saying the male bus driver would hear their voices. Shocked by the "immoral" singing in her ancestral continent, her zeal was squelched by a Muslim from the Nile Valley.

It was evident at Khartoum that the assembled women, heirs to disparate histories and cultures, were living examples of the diversity of Muslim experience and ideological variations among women

for whom an Islamic identity is salient. Many held advanced degrees in the arts, social sciences, engineering, medicine, communications and computer science. They were intellectuals, writers, journalists, members of parliament and government officials. They were women political activists, some of whom had been jailed including one delegate incarcerated by the Israelis following their invasion of southern Lebanon in 1982.

The women fell into three main categories. Firstly, women from predominantly or exclusively Muslim countries. These included a sizeable delegation from Iran, women from Turkey, Malaysia, Nigeria and from several Arab countries. Noticeably absent were women from Algeria, Saudi Arabia and all but one of the Gulf states. Secondly, Muslims from minority communities, such as those from the former Soviet Union and East bloc countries who only recently have been allowed to surface as a religious group. Thirdly, Muslims from the West. These included mainly "new Muslims" as well as a few diaspora Arab Muslims all of whom have minority status. Participants were united in support of their co-religionists in Palestine, Bosnia, Chechnya and Kashmir.

The Forum voted to establish the International Islamic Union of Women with headquarters in Khartoum. An Iranian suggestion to create a women's branch of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference comprising some fifty-two states came to naught. Souad Al-Fatih, former dean and professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Islamic University in Omdurman, was acclaimed president of the new Union. Sherifa Al-Khadra from Malaysia was elected head of the executive board and Anasofia Roald, professor of Islamic Studies at Lund University in Sweden, was named deputy head. The International Islamic Union of Women installed itself in the offices of Wisal Al-Mahdi's IOMW, which dissolved itself immediately following the conference, signifying the transition to a more global arena of activism.



United States President Bill Clinton gets a look at the person under the "Clinton mask" as American youngster Andy Bosaclach lifts the mask off at the president's request in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (photo: AFP)

## Clinton poised for victory

Iraq has become the hottest issue in the race to the White House, writes Hoda Tawfik from Washington

The dramatic speeches are over. What follows now is the serious talk to convince the American voter who the best choice will be on 5 November — election day.

Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton has responded with missile strikes to Iraq's military assault on Arbil in northern Iraq. It remains to be seen how the decision to intervene in Iraq will affect the way American voters judge his bid for re-election. Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole initially criticised what he described as Clinton's "weak strategy vis-a-vis Iraqi President Saddam Hussein", but expressed his support after Clinton ordered missile strikes on Iraq. The attacks, involving the firing of more than 40 cruise missiles at Iraqi targets, occurred less than 24 hours apart during the last two days.

Dole criticised United Nations Security Council Resolution 986, which allows Iraq to sell a limited quantity of oil — \$2 billion worth — over the next six months to buy food and medicine for its population. "The move was premature and ill-advised and should not be implemented," Dole said.

United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali suspended the oil-for-food agreement with Iraq after its attack on Arbil.

Issues of foreign policy have been lacking in the presidential campaign as well as in the party conventions of the Republicans and the Democrats. But Iraq's action intruded on Clinton's bus tour and dominated discussions at the Democratic

Party convention in Chicago. Clinton, having an indeterminate foreign policy to deal with, is keen to show his eloquence in foreign affairs — and what better way to capture the headlines than to bully Baghdad. After a harmonious convention and train and bus trip — previews to the autumn campaign demonstrating Clinton's prowess — Democrats are looking forward to election day. Convention shows have come to their balloon-drop endings.

To the American people as well as to the world, Clinton was re-nominated as the "bridge to the future". While both Clinton and Dole are on the road, billionaire Ross Perot, running far behind his rivals in all presidential polls, is urging voters to abandon the two main parties which he claims have bankrupted the country. The American voter is asked to choose between Dole, as bridge to the past, and Clinton, who made an eloquent case in his acceptance speech that he is prepared to be the first president of the 21st century and to lead at home and abroad.

But Clinton's triumphant moment at the climax of the Democratic convention and a four-day train trip through the critical region of the Midwest was overshadowed by a sex scandal. It was the last thing Clinton needed and it could not possibly have come at a worse time. Just a few hours before Clinton appealed for the support of the convention, Dick Morris, President Clinton's chief campaign adviser and the central

force behind the convention's emphasis on family values, announced his resignation, after a tabloid exposed his lurid affair with a \$200-an-hour prostitute. Clinton was devastated. The bombshell disrupted the convention, while Clinton aides scurried to distance the president from Morris's reported 10-month affair with the woman.

Nevertheless, Clinton accepted the renomination and promised to bring hope back to America. His speech followed a strange video clip, portraying Clinton presiding over the signature ceremony of the Oslo Agreement at the White House and the famous handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. It signalled a refocus on the bright spot of Clinton's role in bringing peace to the Middle East.

In his acceptance speech, he defended his first term and listed plans for the second. His pledges reflected a moderate agenda. He commanded centre stage as no Democrat has done in more than a generation. But the convention revealed deep divisions on issues like welfare, and the president was widely criticised for signing a recent welfare reform bill. There are some who hope for an Al Gore succession by the year 2000; they saw Gore as the real star of the Chicago convention.

The most eloquent speaker, and the most impressive, was Jesse Jackson. "We must seek a new moral centre," he said. "As we gather here, one-fifth of all American children will go to bed in poverty." Poverty was high on the Democratic Party agenda. "One half of all African-American children grow up amidst broken sidewalks, broken families, broken cities, broken dreams," Jackson said. "The top one per cent of the wealthiest Americans own as much as the bottom 95 per cent, the greatest inequality since the 1920s."

Two of the big issues being debated during the presidential campaign are crime and terrorism. Republicans claim they would be more forceful than Clinton in attacking terrorist cells in the Middle East. While Democrats debate the direction of the party, the celebration in Chicago can only mask, not erase, the challenges Clinton and his fellow Democrats face in trying to shape their future as a party.

It is obvious that the president's strong showing in the polls stands in contrast to the much weaker support his party enjoys among the electorate at large. The president has personally prospered in polls but the public is antagonistic toward the kind of liberalism that has animated the Democratic Party and its activist core for the past half-century.

Commentators who followed the Democratic convention in Chicago say that the delegates were more liberal than America at large, more liberal than the party's platform and more liberal than President Clinton. The Democrats' liberal wing, however, is exerting very little influence on the direction of the party.

## The capitalists' darling

Miso Alkalaj unearths the secrets of the Czech Republic's popularity with the West

Of all the countries of the former East European communist bloc, the Czech Republic is generally voted "the most likely to succeed" by Western economic analysts.

The Velvet Revolution, which ousted the communist regime of Czechoslovakia, was a peaceful one, deeply in contrast with some of those which occurred in neighbouring countries. Since then Czech President Vaclav Havel has brought political stability and a vision that has promoted broad support for Western political and economic reforms. His vast popularity continues today and is a symbol of Czech commitment to constant advancement in creating a fully functional market-based economy.

Yet Czechoslovakia suffered from internal tensions which caused the Velvet Separation of 1994, the successor countries being the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Slovakia mostly inherited the large enterprises so popular during socialist days, while Czechs kept the more versatile and flexible industries. The Czech Republic also had the advantage of inheriting relatively low debts, a balanced budget and extremely low unemployment rates.

The result of these advantages and subsequent reforms has been a fast-growing market economy. At present, private sector output makes up 60 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and is increasing rapidly. According to the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, unemployment stands at 2.8 per cent, significantly lower than that of any other country in the region, and the growth rate was approximately three per cent in 1994. The rapid transformation of the Czech economy from central state control to a thriving market-based economy has meant that government regulations have often been ignored and protections found in Western economies for investors, depositors and pensioners are weak or non-existent. Government corruption scandals have plagued the privatisation process over the past year and investigations have been launched into political party donations.

The very attractiveness of the Czech economy has also created a situation where the huge inflow of foreign currency over the past couple of years has put severe inflationary pressure on the Czech currency, the koruna. The Central Bank, which pegs the koruna to the US dollar and the German mark within a narrow trading band of 0.5 per cent, would like, however, to keep the koruna at today's exchange rate of approximately 27 to the dollar. The Central Bank currently has hard currency reserves of \$9.1 billion, the largest in the region. With 10.5 million inhabitants, the reserves per capita amount to \$872.25.

Western analysts attribute much of the Czechs' success to a fast and effective privatisation programme, which has included three waves of public offerings. Government statistics show roughly 80 per cent of the economy is in private hands now that the assets of 1,500 state-run companies have been sold off.

The general public were given a role in privatisation through a system of vouchers, which were sold to Czech citizens for a nominal price. More than two-thirds of the Czechs who bought vouchers, being unfamiliar with private investment, cashed them in to newly created investment funds, whose number grew to over 700 during the process. Each investment fund is allowed to own up to 20 per cent of a company. With a "mandate" acquired through people's investment in them, these funds have taken the key decisions on what and how much company stock to buy.

To get a clear and complete picture of the privatisation process it is important to understand the definition of a privatised company. A privatised company in the Czech Republic only requires limited private participation. In fact, cases where the controlling interest is held by private concerns are relatively rare. The government's National Property Fund, created to assist in the disposal of state assets, continues to control on average 40 per cent of privatised companies' stock — meaning the state is still the primary stockholder.

The most powerful of the 700 Czech investment funds are subsidiaries of state-influenced banks. It is estimated that Czech investment funds hold upwards of 70 per cent of all shares issued in the first two waves of privatisation, with 80 per cent of those shares owned by only four firms. Three of these four investment funds are owned by former state banks that remain heavily influenced by the government. Among countries with market economies, the Czech Republic has one of the highest concentrations of ownership.

While investors are restricted to 20 per cent ownership per company, there are no laws restricting collaboration between investment firms in acquiring controlling stock positions. There have already been several cases where investment funds have pooled their stocks in an effort to either change corporate strategy or dictate personnel decisions. Unlike investment firms in liberalised economies, the Czech investment funds are not controlled by a single powerful shareholder. Instead, they are a collection of smaller shareholders.

Investors from the EU also display much interest in the purchase of Czech enterprises, particularly large infrastructure systems. The Czech investment funds are regularly trying to prevent the sale of Czech companies to foreign investors, but they rarely succeed. The most publicised example was the state-owned telephone company, SPT, which was eventually sold to a Swiss-Dutch consortium. Naturally, foreign companies which take advantage of cheap Czech labour rarely make their real profits in the Czech Republic. Finished goods are exported at minimal prices to distribution companies in the West, which pocket the profit made out of the final retail prices.

The consequences of this magnanimous attitude towards Western (primarily EU) investors are already in evidence. Recent Czech trade results show an expansion in the current account deficit. For the first seven months of 1995 the trade deficit reached \$3.35 billion koruna (\$1.97 billion). Czech exports for this period were up 8.5 per cent on the same seven months of 1994, but imports increased by 32 per cent. Western analysts blame the growing trade deficit on the slow progress of industrial restructuring, the strength of the koruna and high domestic demand for goods earmarked for export.

The Czech Republic still faces significant obstacles to trade with industrialised countries in its key exports, which include textiles, agricultural and metallurgical products. Therefore, it is looking to re-establish trading ties with neighbouring countries and in particular boost exports to Slovakia with which it now experiences a trade deficit. Slovakia was much less hospitable to foreign investors and is much less popular among Western analysts. The Czech Republic has chosen a method of transition to market economy which attracts foreign investors with low effectively government-controlled — wages, easy transfer of profits and firm fiscal policies. Naturally, this brings unanimous praise from the West. Countries of comparable economic growth and wages which have remained somewhat more hesitant in opening their economy to foreign investment get black marks. Poland and Hungary are good examples.

"The Czech way" has produced a reasonably stable political environment, low unemployment and a sturdy economy. Since the economy is increasingly owned by EU companies, it becomes quite easy to understand why the Czech Republic is viewed by the EU as the prime candidate for full membership. If the EU gets its way, it will be incorporating an economy its companies will largely own by the year 2000.

The writer is head of the statistics centre at the Joseph Stefan Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

## Saving the children

"SEXUALLY exploited children are tragically invisible to the rest of the world, but we are here to make them visible," said Carol Bellamy, executive director of the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), in her keynote address to the first World Congress Against Commercial Exploitation of Children, which opened on 27 August in Stockholm, Sweden. Bellamy called the industry "a big business... destroying the lives of millions of children worldwide each year". The industry in fact generates billions of dollars in profits for enterprises ranging from pimps and massage parlours, taxi drivers and middlemen selling children.

Some 1,200 delegates from 126 countries and 50 non-governmental organisations attended the congress to "defend the rights of the weakest members of society", in the words of German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel. Ron O'Grady, international coordinator for End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, told the conference that "up to one million children in Asia will receive 10-12 million adult male customers during the week we are in Stockholm".

Delegates agreed that the child sex trade had become a worldwide problem in recent years — particularly in the South where poverty has made children especially vulnerable.

Edited by Gamal Nkrumah

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**Moro peace pact**

THE PHILIPPINE government and the rebel Muslim Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) signed a historic peace pact this week to end a war which lasted 24 years and claimed 120,000 lives. But the Christian majority and Islamic extremists in the south of the country have pledged to oppose the accord.

Nur Misuri, chairman of the MNLF, and government chief negotiator Manuel Yan signed the agreement, which followed three years of talks, at the Malacanang presidential palace in the capital Manila. The pact had been initialed in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Analysts have cautioned against pinning too much hope on the accord, whose main provision, the creation of an MNLF-led council that will supervise development projects in 14 mainly Christian provinces to the south of the Philippines, has come under fire.

The council, called the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development, will prepare for a referendum in 1998 in which residents of the 14 provinces, a land area about twice the size of Taiwan, will be asked if they want to be part of an autonomous Muslim region.

President Fidel Ramos said the peace accord with Muslim rebels was only the first stage of an "arduous" task to stop the impoverished southern Philippines sliding back into war and chaos. The pact has boosted hopes for a flow of investment into the south. However, Christians who fear Muslim domination have vowed to continue with demonstrations opposing the agreement.

The region has 10 million residents, including about three million Muslims. Christians, mostly descendants of post-World War II settlers from the northern and central Philippines, now make up the majority.

**China woos Taiwanese**

CHINA has launched a fresh attempt to woo the Taiwanese people by announcing a series of regulations to govern direct shipping links with Taiwan. China said the regulations, which took effect late last month, were aimed at promoting cargo and passenger transport across the Strait of Taiwan, which separates the breakaway island from the Chinese mainland.

The Taiwanese government complained that the new rules were unacceptable because they give China absolute authority in dealing with cross-strait shipping. But Taiwanese public and shipping firms reacted enthusiastically and investors rushed to buy shipping shares. In a separate development, the Taiwanese government announced it would restrict its investments in China if Beijing continued to deteriorate.

**Bhutto has a dream**

PAKISTANI Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has said that she has a dream for South Asia's 400 million children, most of whom live in grinding poverty and rarely attend school and many of whom work as child labour. Bhutto told a meeting of the seven-nation South Asian association for Regional Cooperation that there had been a lot of "powerful words" bout children's rights in the region, but little action.

South Asia's children are being exploited by industries looking for cheap labour. It is estimated by the International Labour Organisation that between 31 million and 88 million children in South Asia are in the workforce. South Asia's apparel industry has been singled out for condemnation for exploiting tiny nimble fingers of children to weave its finest products.

India and Pakistan, South Asia's biggest countries, spend nearly half their annual budgets on defence. Each year 37 million babies are born in South Asia, a region that is already home to a quarter of the world's children, according to a 1996 annual report of UNICEF. Four million, malnutrition and poor hygiene killed 3.5 million children under five years old in the region last year, the report said.

**Khmer turmoil**

CAMBODIAN Co-Premier Hun Sen this week called on King Sihanouk's government to agree to the integration of a breakaway Khmer Rouge faction and demanded an amnesty for their leader, Ieng Sary. The dissident group has been negotiating with the Cambodian government and warning that it fears an attack by hardline Khmer Rouge forces loyal to the notorious Pol Pot, who terrorised the entire country in the 1960s and 1970s. The Khmer Rouge fled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 and killed two million Cambodians through starvation, disease, overwork and mass executions.

Leaders of the dissident Khmer Rouge faction have warned that Pol Pot's forces want to oust them from their strategic stronghold and trading centre, Ailim, about 275 kilometres northwest of the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh. The Pailin area produces precious stones and timber which are smuggled across the border into Thailand and Burma.

Gemstones played a crucial role in funding the Khmer Rouge's war against the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

**Indonesian crackdown**

INDONESIAN authorities have pinned the blame for the unrest which hit the country last month on the People's Democratic Party (PDP), a small pro-democracy group. The Indonesian government has branded the PDP as a communist organisation and arrested its leader Budiman Sugamiko on suspicion of subversion. Indonesia outlawed communism in 1966 after the former Indonesian Communist Party, then the largest communist party after the Soviet and Chinese parties, was accused of masterminding a coup.

Chief opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the country's first president, Sukarno, was questioned again by police for her role in the riots which rocked the Indonesian capital Jakarta on 27 July. Also interrogated was Muchtar Pakpahan, the chairman of the Indonesian Prosperity Trade Union, an independent labour organisation. Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country with important Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and animist minorities, has the largest Islamic population of any nation in the world.



Jamaican sportswoman Merlene Ottey poses with a girl on the catwalk for the Puma company at the "Igedo" fashion fair in Dusseldorf — African and Third World designers are in vogue (photo: AFP)

## Islamists take on gangsters in South Africa

Though Muslims account for a mere seven per cent of the South African population, they are geographically concentrated in the Cape. Militant Islamism seems to be gaining ground among them, reports Sophia Christoforakis from Cape Town

On 4 August a convoy of 500 cars left the Gatesville Mosque in the gangland of Cape Town, South Africa, and headed for the home of the notorious Rasta Staggie, leader of the Hard Livings gang. Soon after Staggie arrived at his home, he was shot in the head, dragged from his car and set alight with a petrol bomb.

The men in the cars were vigilantes belonging to a new Muslim-inspired anti-crime and anti-drug movement called People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) whose renown has spread rapidly throughout South Africa during the past few weeks. The movement is taking the law into its own hands. "The main problem," said K K Kurtha, leader of a branch of the movement in the Laudium township of the Pretoria region, "is that the police are not doing enough, so society has to do its part."

The reputed driving force behind the movement is Qibla, a Cape Town-based Islamic organisation. Last week, at a Cape Town stadium with a crowd of 20,000 cheering him on, Qibla leader Achmad Cassiem pronounced: "Allah says that he will not change the condition of the people until they change themselves... There is an obligation to create a society sober from birth until death."

Achmad Cassiem, also referred to as the Imam, founded Qibla in the late 1970s, around the time of the Iranian revolution and the revolutionary black

consciousness movement in South Africa. Qibla became a fusion of militant pan-Islamism and radical pan-Africanism, held together by the assertion that Africa is a Muslim continent. Cassiem sat in mosques, listened to the local Muslim community radio station, heard his community talk about the daily distress the gangs inflict on their lives and found a new role for Qibla.

At public meetings, Muslims draped in Palestinian scarves have declared that they have the backing of Hizbullah and Hamas. Kurtha is dubious about such claims, describing them as products of "emotional bravado, creating sensational rather than having any truth or substance". Many South African Muslims from the Western Cape Province received military training both locally and abroad in countries as far afield as Lebanon, Libya and Iran during the anti-apartheid struggle of the 1970s. "There are members of the [Muslim] community who have received local training within the anti-apartheid groups," Kurtha said.

In dealing with the drug lords, the Cape Town branch of PAGAD has generally embraced a more violent strategy than branches in other parts of the country. Last week, members of the Cape Town movement cornered a man selling the narcotic mandrax in the Cape Town suburb of Athlone and poured petrol over him. He managed to escape be-

fore being set alight.

After the killing of Staggie, one of the movement's leaders, Muhammad Ali Parker, declared: "It's going into a jihad now. All the signs are there. Each soldier of Allah is equivalent to 5,000 gangsters. We are clean God-loving people who are not afraid to die."

Kurtha, on the other hand, said that in his Pretoria region the movement has decided to embark on peaceful ways of trying to bring attention to the Muslim community's problems. Their intention is not to take the law into their own hands, he said, "but rather to encourage authorities, through peaceful means, to do their share".

Kurtha argues that the only strong moral point of view that is emerging in the new South Africa is the Islamic one. "We have noticed that with the advent of democracy and social and individual freedom," he said, "certain anti-Islamic vices have crept in, such as pornography and the legalisation of abortion, and this is frightening us. That is why Muslims are rallying together to try and uphold the moral level of society."

The reaction of the Muslims can also be attributed to a structural factor: the majority of the Muslim population still lives in racially exclusive townships developed during the apartheid era. "These areas lack adequate social facilities," Kurtha explained, "and this leads to outbreaks of frustrations, the for-

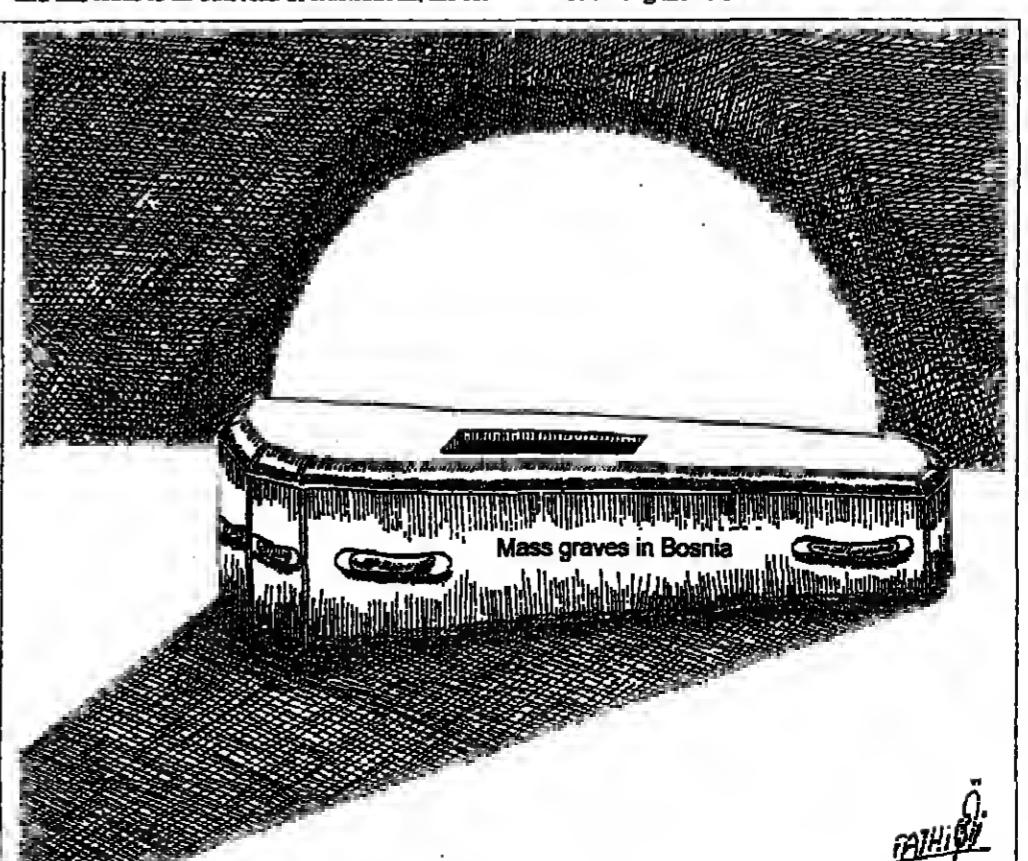
mation of sub-cultures, and a close-knit society where these factors are more noticeable."

Drug dealers in Laudium are selling to children within the grounds of local schools. "The drug lords are targeting the youth, who are our future," Kurtha said. "We have identified certain drug dealers whose children are at the schools and apparently their children are selling to other children."

When asked why he was embarking on a fight against crime and drugs, Achmad Cassiem replied: "I don't want my son accusing me of having done nothing in my time, just like the children of 1976 and 1985 [who took up arms in uprisings against apartheid] accused their fathers." The South African police fear that Islamist militants could be trying to gain a foothold in the country and have placed a ban on any members of extreme Islamist organisations entering the country.

On the eve of the first democratic South African elections in 1994, Achmad Cassiem pronounced from platforms in mosques that South Africa would be an Islamic state by the year 2000. He still holds this assertion.

"That would be an ideal situation," Kurtha said. "But I think that it is far-fetched. Muslims comprise seven per cent of the population and are, therefore, in the minority — though I must say Islam is on the increase among the masses of South Africa."



## Global trade and legal aid

**Gamal Nkrumah** met with Africa's legal experts and other participants at the eighth annual conference of the African Society of International and Comparative Law, which ended in Cairo today

African leaders need to come out of their ivory towers and get down to the business of achieving continental economic integration. Developments in the global economy confirm that the new world order has universally adopted the rules-based trading system of the World Trade Organisation to police world trade. Africa cannot afford to ignore these international developments. It must galvanise its human resources to tackle international trade issues and hasten the process of continental economic integration. Judging from the distinguished legal experts assembled in Cairo this week, Africa has the expertise to revamp its leadership's half-hearted attempts at regional integration.

As Ambassador Hussein Hassouna, Egyptian Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stepped on the podium to deliver a speech on behalf of Foreign Minister Amr Mousa, there was an air of expectancy from the African delegates. It was Hassouna's very first assignment as assistant foreign minister after his return to Egypt the day preceding the start of the eighth annual conference of the African Society of International and Comparative Law, which met in Cairo on 2-5 September. He had been serving abroad as an ambassador for seven years. Egypt has long been interested in achieving economic integration in Africa, which was the main theme of the Cairo conference. Consolidating continental efforts to integrate African economies falls as much within the domain of legal experts as of Africa's politicians.

The Cairo Programme of Action for Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development identified African economic integration as the key to the continent's prosperity. Regional integration is essential if Africa is to be taken seriously in international economic and political affairs. There is a need to define the legal aspects of African economic integration. "To define a clear perspective, understanding and framework for African regional integration is a prerequisite for any successful effort towards achieving such integration," Hassouna said in his opening speech. "Such a legal perspective can certainly not ignore the socio-economic realities of the African continent. It should, on the contrary, be inspired by the existing situation and framed in its right political dimension. That is why Egypt took the initiative to host a special session of the Council of Ministers of the Organisation of African Unity in March 1995," he added.

R H Thomas, visiting scholar at the Research Centre for International Law, University of Cambridge, England, and associate director of the Centre for Policy and Information of the Development Bank of Southern Africa, South Africa, delivered a paper that raised a number of issues pertinent to the establishment of a more workable trade regime in southern Africa. "There is serious divergence between member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)," Thomas told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "The SADC is supposed to be one of the better run African economic groupings and yet there are grave differences between the member states, which often have competing interests.

Yakpo emphasised that African governments are usually happy to cooperate with the society. "We do not have an office in Nigeria. The reason is that we do not like to work in a military set-up. We must have a legal system that we can rely on. There are enough human rights organisations which are willing to confront the military regime in Nigeria. Amnesty International and many other local Nigerian groups are better placed to do that sort of thing," Yakpo said.

"African governments support our endeavours. We are supplying a service that they would like to provide. We have never faced big problems with governments because we avoid dealing with military dictatorships. We are not activists. We are not willing to confront a military regime and we do not want to duplicate the work of human rights groups. We provide legal aid to defenceless people. We avoid confrontation with governments. Human rights is on our agenda, but we have other priorities," he stressed.

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When asked why he was embarking on a fight against crime and drugs, Achmad Cassiem replied: "I don't want my son accusing me of having done nothing in my time, just like the children of 1976 and 1985 [who took up arms in uprisings against apartheid] accused their fathers." The South African police fear that Islamist militants could be trying to gain a foothold in the country and have placed a ban on any members of extreme Islamist organisations entering the country.

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# Cotton prices hurt textiles

Cotton farmers may be satisfied by the government's recent moves, but other industry representatives deem the initiatives short-sighted, writes Niveen Wahish

A recent announcement by government officials, guaranteeing cotton farmers a minimum delivery price of LE500 per qantar (1 qantar=50kg), has stirred Egyptian cotton exporters' fears, as well as those of local spinning and weaving companies, that the 1995/96 cotton tragedy would recur this season.

The problem with the 1995/96 cotton season can be traced back to the previous cotton season when a high international demand for Egyptian cotton resulted in a shortage of cotton in the local market. Due to a drop in cotton production by other countries, Egypt exported approximately one million qantars of the crop, but was subsequently forced to import cotton and cotton yarn at high prices to meet the needs of local spinning and weaving companies. Realising that local companies had paid high prices for imported cotton, farmers began complaining and demanded higher prices for their crop for the 1995/96 season. In response, the government announced that it would pay farmers LE500 per qantar before the crop was cultivated. However, at the same time, good harvests in India and Pakistan pushed down international cotton prices, a turn of events that was compounded by a

less-than-expected Egyptian harvest. The government was then forced to ban cotton exports in order to protect local mills, and ultimately only about 350,000 qantars were exported that season.

The solution, however, proved to be inadequate as local mills were forced to purchase over-priced Egyptian cotton, thereby also pushing up the price of their production, irrespective of whether it was for export or local use.

But again, for the 1996/97 season, the government has announced that farmers are guaranteed a minimum delivery price of LE500 per qantar. According to Mohamed Edris, head of the Central Administration of Agricultural Cooperatives, by setting this price, the government is not forcing farmers to sell at this price, but is only guaranteeing that they will not receive less than the LE500 per qantar. Edris added that the government had to take this step in order to prevent farmers from cultivating other, more profitable crops, on their land.

The government is trying to help cotton re-acquire its former status as a strategic crop," stated Edris.

Over the past 15 years, problems in cultivating and pricing cotton have led to a drastic reduction in the

area of land used for the cultivation of cotton. In 1961, 2.2 million feddans were planted with cotton, be said. But by 1995, this area had shrunk to 800,000 feddans.

While the government's decision may have set farmers' hearts at ease, it has angered exporters, traders and representatives of local mills, who claim that the price set by the government far exceeds the one on the international market. Consequently, they feel it will result in great losses on their part.

Edris, however, argued that "Egypt is a price-maker, not a price-taker." Egyptian cotton is unique and, therefore, has a right to set its own prices, he added.

Nevertheless, to appease these parties, Edris said that the government has finally allowed the importation of cheaper cotton from India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Turkey. In the past, only cotton from California and Arizona was allowed into the country, on the grounds that crops from other countries may bring with them pests that are dangerous to the local crop.

Though angered by the price set, representatives of local spinning and weaving companies saw the decision to allow entry of other cotton crops as, at the most, a reasonable

temporary solution. Fathy Nematalah, a board member of the Holding Company for Spinning and Weaving and a member of parliament, said that the price set for Egyptian cotton is inflated. While Egyptian cotton is valued at around \$1.45 per libra (1 libra=1 pound), other cotton sold on the international market is valued at \$0.73 per libra. Moreover, the price of one qantar of cotton has almost doubled over a three-year period. In 1992, the price of one qantar was LE255, but by 1995, the price had rocketed to LE1,200 more than 1994's price.

This dramatic increase in price, which came as a result of the liberalisation of cotton, said Nematalah, has cost local spinning and weaving companies a great deal in terms of profit.

A case in point is El-Mahala Company, which requires one million qantars per year to operate. The company, however, had to absorb an additional cost of LE120 million as a result of the price increases, forcing it to suffer a year-end loss. And, on the whole, local spinning and weaving companies suffered LE600 million in losses for that same year.

Similarly, Nematalah believes

that these same companies stand to lose LE2,000 per qantar if they use Egyptian cotton at its current price. As a result, the news that the government would allow cotton imports from other countries was welcomed.

"We have been demanding this for two years, and finally the government agreed," he said. While cotton from India or Pakistan is inferior to Egyptian cotton, it fulfills the needs of local spinning and weaving companies," added Nematalah.

The actual importation of cotton has yet begun. The spinning and weaving companies, he said, have only placed orders to import samples. They will be tried out to see if they are suitable for the local industry.

But despite the fact that these companies will now be able to use other, less expensive varieties of cotton, Egyptian cotton is still their first choice. If spinning and weaving companies are offered cotton at a reasonable price, it would be better than exporting it as lint cotton, stated Nematalah. One ton of lint cotton, when exported, costs LE6,000-7,000. But, if spun into yarn and then exported, it sells for LE12,000. And, if woven, prepared and then exported, it sells for LE20,000. "The manufacturing process is a

value-added industry that not only generates greater revenue, but also employs more than 500,000 people," he explained.

While conceding that the importation of foreign cotton has addressed the fears of local spinning and weaving industry representatives, many like Nematalah wonder what the government will do with the excess production of Egyptian cotton that was usually used by local companies. "The government will be left with a lot of cotton on its hands, but the maximum that Egypt was ever able to export is about one million qantars," he said.

And even if the government is trying to stop farmers from foraging the cultivation of cotton in favour of more profitable crops, its recent decisions are not really the best solutions, added Nematalah. His task, he said, should be the responsibility of the projected Cotton Price Fund (CPF), which should also be charged with compensating farmers for an unexpected drop in cotton prices. The establishment of the CPF, however, is still being debated although expert hope that it will actually be formed soon.

Also commenting on the government's moves, Abu Bakr Ghoneim, head of the General Committee for

the Regulation of Internal Cotton Trade, and deputy-chairman of the Federation of Cotton Exporters, said that cotton prices should be set with international, not local, prices in mind.

The fact that the price of Egyptian cotton exceeds the international price will definitely affect Egyptian exports, whether the cotton is sold as linn, yarn or woven material, he said. It will also weaken the Egyptian cotton's competitive position. These problems may be overcome, said Ghoneim, once the CPF begins operating.

"The CPF will be the solution to everyone's problems," he stated. And, given that the harvest season has already begun in some areas, the CPF's mechanisms will have to be laid out soon.

This year's harvest, according to Ghoneim, is expected to yield about 6.5 million qantars, allowing Egypt the luxury of exporting more than it had in previous years. In this light, he argued, the government's decision to allow entry to other imported cotton could be beneficial. With local mills and companies using the imported cotton for their production, the government will have about three million qantars of cotton for export purposes.

## Privatisation bonanza

**The United Nations Compensations Commission may still be awaiting the funds to compensate hundreds of thousands of Gulf War victims. But it has come a long way in processing and approving compensation claims, writes Walid Abdel-Nasser**

Five years ago, the international community, represented by the UN Security Council, decided to establish an institutional framework to compensate individuals, corporations, governments and international organisations that suffered losses and damages as a direct result of the 1990-91 Gulf War. The Security Council established a commission and a fund for that purpose. The fund was to receive part of Iraq's oil revenue, once the sanctions were lifted, in order to finance the operation and pay compensation claims submitted through the Compensation Commission. Meanwhile, the function of the commission was to process and verify these claims.

The UNCC's Governing Council established six categories of claims: category A claims are for the costs of departure from Iraq or Kuwait; category B claims are for death or serious personal injury; categories C and D include individual loss of income below and above \$100,000, respectively; category E is for corporate losses; and category F is for losses sustained by governments and international organisations, as well as environmental damages and the depletion of natural resources. The first three categories have been awarded priority due to their humanitarian nature.

While fixed amounts of compensation were awarded for successful claims in categories A and B, the amount to be paid for successful claims in other categories depends on an assessment by the Panel of Commissioners. In turn, this assessment is based on supporting evidence.

Roughly one million claimants, mostly workers from Third World countries, and their families, were forced to leave Iraq or Kuwait because of the crisis and the war. While some escaped through Iran, Saudi Arabia and other neighbouring countries, a large number of them travelled to Jordan from where they returned to their countries of origin. In order to accurately assess these claims, the UNCC's secretariat collected more than 5 million records from 28 countries and two international organisations to verify the departure of claimants in the relevant period.

The Commission received 950,000 category A claims from the citizens of 86 countries. The Organisation of Inter-

national Migration (OIM) provided lists of charter flight passengers evacuated by the OIM; the Iraqi government submitted a list with the names of Arab and foreign workers who left after 2 August 1990 — the date of the invasion of Kuwait — and the Kuwaiti government submitted a list of the names of all individuals — nationals and foreigners — who were in Kuwait on the same date. The Commission has so far processed and issued compensation awards on five instalments of category A claims, including 785,000 claims valued at over \$2.8 billion submitted by citizens of 86 countries. The sixth and final instalment of this category is expected to be considered by the UNCC Governing Council in its forthcoming session this October.

For category B claims, the UNCC received 6,265 claims from 49 countries and from three international organisations on behalf of persons, mainly Palestinians, who do not have governments to submit their claims. In December 1995, the Commission had finished processing category B claims, and has already paid \$13,500,000 to about 4,000 claimants.

Category C, which covers individual claims for damages up to \$100,000, includes various types of losses such as: inability to leave Iraq or Kuwait; damages resulting from departure from Iraq or Kuwait, and from death and serious personal injury exceeding the fixed compensation amounts under categories A and B; being taken hostage or subjected to other forms of involuntary detention; loss of personal property or belongings; loss of bank accounts, stocks or other securities; unpaid salaries or support; real estate losses; and individual business losses. More than 430,000 category C claims were submitted to the UNCC on behalf of citizens from 80 countries. On average, each category C claim contains three kinds of losses, bringing the total number of losses to 1,300,000, each of which must be evaluated separately. In order to expedite the processing of this large number of claims, several approaches were used, including sampling, statistical analysis, regression

modeling and individual review. The UNCC secretariat came up with general models for socio-economic conditions for various groups of claimants including their occupation, income and family status. These groupings were used to help assess and verify different types of losses and the amount of compensation that may be claimed. On the basis of these models, minimum, medium and maximum levels are established for each socio-economic group. Claims that do not fit under any of those groups are examined on a case-by-case basis. The UNCC Governing Council has so far approved 129,000 category C claims submitted by 71 countries and two international organisations.

Category D deals with individual claims for damages exceeding \$100,000. The types of losses that can be claimed under this category are similar to those meriting compensation under category C, but the amounts claimed are higher. More than 11,000 category D claims were submitted to the UNCC on behalf of citizens from 47 countries. The value of the claims was approximately \$12 billion.

Category E claims cover corporate losses. The most common types of claims filed under this category are: construction contract losses; losses from the sales of goods or services; destruction or seizure of business assets; loss of profits and other contract losses. The Commission received more than 6,000 claims in this category, valued at \$82 billion, from corporations in 70 countries.

Category F claims have been submitted by various governments and international organisations, and cover losses including the costs of evacuating people; damages to diplomatic premises or other government property; and damages to the environment as well as depletion of natural resources. Some 225 claims from this category have been submitted to the Commission from 42 governments and two international organisations, and are valued at over \$100 billion.

The UNCC's secretariat recently began to use a number of techniques to help expedite the processing of claims belonging to categories D, E and F. The Commission compiled these claims into groups based on common legal issues. Moreover, claims that can serve as precedents are settled first in order to help resolve other, similar cases. Accountants and experts from other fields assist the Panel of Commissioners when dealing with those claims. In cases that are legally complex, written submissions or hearings are held, as was the case with claims submitted by the Central Bank of Egypt and the Kuwaiti Oil Corporation.

Given these figures and the scope of its work, the UNCC not only represents the largest compensation operation of this kind in modern history, it has also been the most expedient. While similar operations in the past handled 500,000 claims at most, and took years to start acting, the UNCC has taken on roughly 2.6 million claims and managed to get off the ground in only 75 days and, within three years, had issued the first compensation awards. The UNCC is also the least expensive compensation operation: the cost of operating similar operations in the past was around eight per cent of the overall value of compensation awarded. That of administering the UNCC, however, is less than one per cent of the compensation awarded by the end of 1996, and is expected to go below five per cent of total compensation in the future.

Moreover, the Commission has so far issued compensation awards in favour of 1.2 million claimants from 90 countries, and has already paid category B claims.

The oil-for-food agreement signed between the UN and Iraq, launched a massive humanitarian operation to make available necessary relief aid for Iraqi citizens and the victims of the invasion and the war. Once the agreement is implemented, roughly \$100 million monthly will be made available to the compensation fund, enabling it to pay substantial amounts to other claimants.

The writer is Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of the UNCC and the commission's press officer.

## Amexbonds

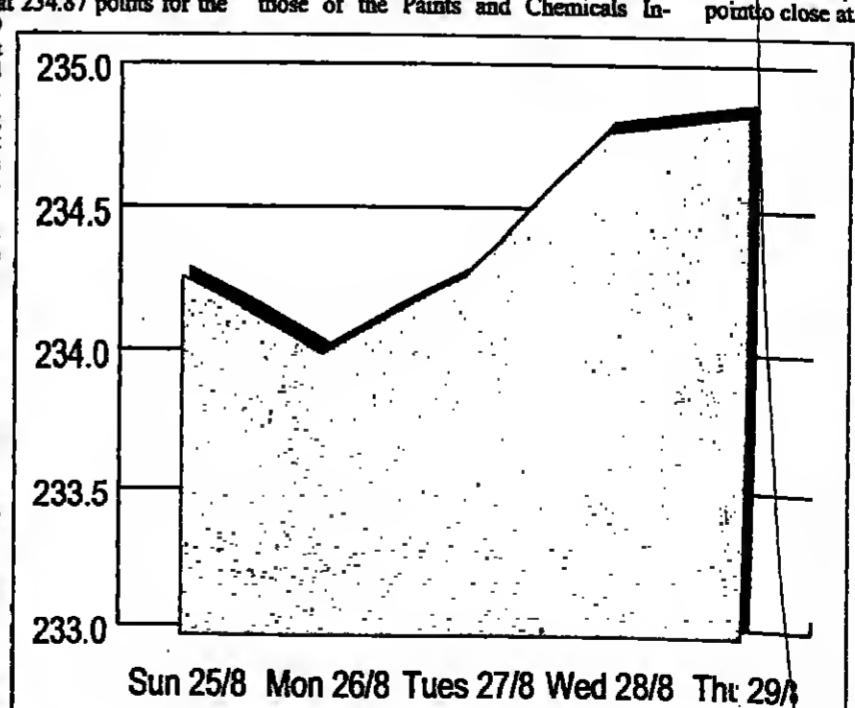
**THE AMERICAN Express Bank will float 200,000 5-year bonds worth LE200 million. The bonds, which cannot be exchanged for shares, have a nominal value of LE1,000 each, are non-negotiable and do not have a fixed quarterly dividend.**

Subscribers for the bonds, which are being handled through Hemes Financial Securities Brokerage, will begin 11 September and last for 10 days, or until they are fully subscribed.

The American Express Bank is wholly owned by the American Express Company. It has an authorised capital of \$121 million and assets totalling \$12.38 million. It posted profits of \$82 million for a fiscal year ending 31 December 1995 compared to \$85 million for fiscal 1994.

## Market report

### Market surge



Investors this week had their eye on the financial sector, whose index gained 9.62 points to close at 256.45. Shares of the National Society General Bank gained LE75 to close at LE445, while those of the Commercial International Bank (CIB) closed at LE475. With more than LE13.96 million in shares changing hands, CIB's stock gained LE25, 10.21 per cent of its opening value. Similarly, those of El-Watany Development Bank saw heavy trading action, with 606,975 shares — roughly 21.14 per cent of total market trading — changing hands. By the end of the week, El-Watany's shares had gained LE2 to close at LE17.

News that El-Shams Housing and Urbanisation Company is planning to float the majority of its equity for public subscription prompted investors to act en masse. The company's shares registered the highest share price increase. The shares closed at LE13.9, realising a 33.6 per cent increase in value.

Edited by Ghada Nagati

مكنا من الأصل

# Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

On Tuesday, 1 January 1901, *Al-Ahram* suspended publication for a day, the first year of the 20th century, and on Wednesday and Thursday, the second and third of January, the newspaper celebrated the occasion with its readers in its own fashion. Each day it featured a lengthy article occupying most of the space on the front page. Wednesday's article was entitled: "A page turned and a new leaf opened" and Thursday's article, was entitled: "A word on a hundred years passed".

The first day's article was unsigned and one suspects that it was an eleventh hour composition by one of the newspaper's editorial staff because of the many inaccuracies it contained. It treats Egyptian history over the century that had just elapsed. The second article was signed. The author was Youssouf El-Khazin, whose article was far superior and discussed world history over the same period.

Here are extracts from the two articles:

(1) A page turned and a new leaf

Indeed, the 19th century has passed, as it arrived, with one hand stained with blood and the other holding aloft the torch of civilization, shedding its radiance upon the world. It came upon the Orient when the Orient still languished in its stupor and it departed as the Orient entered the infancy of its awakening, a child that could will but was as yet too weak, that had some knowledge but could not comprehend, that aspired but could not obtain... And now that the page of the 19th century has turned, we shall recall what history has penned therein pertaining to this land of Egypt.

On 1 January 1800, Kleber, who remained behind as commander-in-chief of the French expedition after Napoleon departed, was negotiating with the Supreme Porte over terms for a peace; the evacuation of the French troops from Egypt aboard the British ships and the restoration of Egypt to the Ottoman empire. On 24 January, the treaty, known as the Treaty of El-Arish was signed. Yet as the French forces were making preparations to depart, Admiral Kit informed Kleber that the British government did not recognise the Treaty of El-Arish and that the French army would have to surrender. On 21 March, Kleber announced that he preferred death over humiliation and led his men, numbering 10,000, to engage the Turkish army at Matarya (Ain Shams). His forces were victorious. When he returned to Cairo, he found that Ibrahim Bek, one of the senior Mamelukes had entered Cairo and incited its population to rebel (known as the second Cairo insurrection, it was centred in Boulaq). After bombarding the city for 10 days, Kleber re-entered Cairo and appointed Murad Bek as governor. On 14 June, Kleber was assassinated. His assassination was a calamity for the French expedition which had shed much blood in its campaign, although it brought to Egypt 120 scholars and technicians whose influence is still felt today. At the beginning of 1801, the British arrived in Abukir with a force of 30,000 soldiers led by General

Abercrombie. Together with a force of 80,000 Ottoman soldiers they surrounded the French and drove them from Cairo on 25 June and from Alexandria on 2 September.

After the French departed, Egypt was left in the grasp of the Mamelukes, the British and the Turks. In 1805, after much skillful maneuvering, great displays of courage, and careful planning, Mohamed Ali was appointed wali (governor) of Cairo and ruler of Egypt. In that year, Egypt's modern history began, for this was when Mohamed Ali began to build a mighty army and substitute security for chaos. The English, however, saw this as a dire portent for themselves and a boon to Egypt. Therefore they conspired with the Mamelukes to fight Mohamed Ali and humiliate him. Mohamed Ali feared neither the forces of the English nor the Mamelukes, but he convinced the Mamelukes that the British only expelled the French in order to subjugate them. Thus Mohamed Ali was able to raise an enormous force to fight General Fraser and in 1807 he defeated him. Nevertheless the Mamelukes continued to wreak havoc in the country he resolved to retaliate.

In 1811 Mohamed Ali gathered the Mamelukes together in the Citadel. They numbered 450 and he executed them all. In that same year, he undertook preparations for a campaign against the Wahabi movement, placing his sons Ibrahim and Tassim in charge. They conquered the Hijaz in 1822. Then his son Ismail and his brother-in-law, the dafazzular launched an expedition to conquer Nubia, Sennar and Kordofan, and they founded Khartoum. After

1841, when an agreement granting Mohamed Ali the governorship of Egypt was ratified by all the major powers, Mohamed Ali and his sons turned their attention to reform in Egypt. In so doing, they employed the French and other foreigners and Egypt progressed as we can only wish for today. In 1848, Mohamed Ali ceded the governorship of Egypt to his son Ibrahim Pasha, who only ruled for six months until he was overcome by illness and died on 10 November of that year. He was succeeded by Abbas Pasha, the son of his brother, Tussim. Abbas was pro-British and nothing worthy of note took place during his reign. He was succeeded in 1854 by the fourth son of Mohamed Ali, Said Pasha, who resumed the work his father had begun. He granted the peasants personal freedom and the right to own property and he completed construction of the berages and, in 1856, he granted de Lesseps the concession to construct the Suez Canal, work on which began in 1859. On 18 January 1863 Said died to be succeeded by Ismail Pasha, who completed the work of his ancestors. In 1863 he built the House for Egyptian Antiquities and Antiquities which he put under the direction of Mariette Pasha.

In 1866 the Ottoman Porte issued a firman granting the hereditary governorship of Egypt to the descendants of Ismail. In 1867 another supreme firman conferred upon Ismail the title Khedive. In November 1869, Egypt celebrated the opening of the Suez Canal with gala festivities on 9 September 1881, the Orabi move-

This week's instalment of the *Diwan* is special. The chronicler, Dr Yunan Labib Rizq, departs from his customary subject-by-subject treatment on the basis of pertinent reports printed by *Al-Ahram* over an extended time-span. This week, he opts for the bird's-eye-view approach for a special reason. He reproduces two entire articles published by *Al-Ahram* on two consecutive days, one to bid farewell to the 19th century and the other to usher in the 20th century. The articles, appearing on 2 and 3 January of the year 1901, tick off major developments in Egypt and the world during the 19th century. The second article has it that the 19th century had its beginnings in the French Revolution, 21 years before its calendar birth.

such splendor that their joyous echo continues to reverberate through the Nile valley to this day.

In 1871, Ismail launched the military campaigns, led by Samuel Baker and Gordon to conquer the south of Sudan. On 5 August 1876, the first edition of *Al-Ahram* appeared in Alexandria, marking the beginning of the history of the Egyptian press. In 1876, the Egyptian army conquered Kordofan, Darfur, Faizughli, the Red Sea coast, Somalia and a part of Ethiopia and the kingdom of Egypt became so strong that the sultan of Zanzibar appealed to the Khedive to enter under his protection. However, Egypt was weighed down by debts around 99 million sterling pounds, compelling international powers to intervene.

In 1876, instructions were given to establish the Caisse de la Dette Publique to combine all Egyptian debts into one unified debt, to establish a commission for regulating the Egyptian budget and to appoint to it two advisors, one French and one British.

In 1879, the royal family gave up part of their property in favour of the government which pledged it to the Rothschild in return for loans of 8.5 million pounds sterling. In that same year, a dispute arose between Ismail and the controllers of the Caisse, and France and Great Britain appealed to the Supreme Porte to dismiss Ismail. The Supreme Porte complied and on 26 June 1879, Ismail was deposed, to be succeeded by Tawfiq.

On 9 September 1881, the Orabi move-

ment, in its biggest display of strength, demonstrated against Tawfiq. Four thousand soldiers converged on Abdin Square demanding the resignation of the cabinet of Sheriff. On 4 January 1882, the Sheriff government fell and a new government was formed under Mahmud Pasha El-Baradi. On 10 May the French and British consuls demanded that Orabi be banished. On 20 August, 35,000 British troops landed in Port Said and on 28 August the battle of Al-Qassassin took place, lasting no more than five minutes. The battle of Tel El-Kebir took place on 13 September and the British entered Cairo. On 11 January 1883, the system of French and British dual control was abolished and the British took over the administration single-handedly.

In 1892, His Royal Highness Abbas Pasha II ascended to the khedivial throne. The memory of events of this era still kindle brightly, for it was during his reign that Sudan was re-conquered and the system of joint possession with the British was established.

(2) A word on a hundred years passed

At midnight of the day before yesterday, the 19th century ended, to take its place among those bygone centuries in the bottomless abyss of time. The century to which we are bidding farewell, was the phase during which mankind reaped fruits never attained before. Thus its stature among other centuries is as the Great Pyramid among the other pyramids in the land

of the Pharaohs. It is not my purpose here to describe the events of this century gone by. That I will leave to a future occasion. Here, I will simply suggest two characteristics that distinguish this century from those of all other ages and generations.

The first trait is that it is not known by the name of a person or an event, in spite of the many great men who made their mark in the course of this century and the many glorious events that succeeded each other from its opening to its closing days. If history has permitted certain names to be named after great men, that is because those eras were shaped by those men. To these men, those ages owe their glory and magnificence, and were it not for those men, these eras would not have filled numerous pages in the chronicles of time. Thus, it is only right that their names should be stamped upon these eras as they were struck upon their coins and that history should testify to the ages of Pericles, Augustus Caesar, Hamm El-Rashid and Louis XIV who created their grandeur and glory.

But the century goes by is not the fabrication of a single man from whom it can take its epithet. Nor is it the product of a single event that could give it its name as a parent might give a sobriquet to his child. It was not the Corsican giant (Napoleon), who stood at its threshold like the enormous statue of Rhodes, nor the fox of the Rhine (Bismarck) who devised German unity, nor Victor Hugo, who carved great works with the sharpest instruments of Darwin, who spread the shadow of suspicion and scepticism on the origins and fate of mankind, nor Edison, who almost discovered the secret of life, nor Stevenson, who mastered the breath of steam. None of these men of perspicacity and discovery who have tamed nature and brought it under control has the right to have his name affixed to this century.

The 19th century is simply the 19th century, no more and no less. I see no reason for coming up with a better name. The best that can be said is that it was an enormous company in which the masters of science, warfare, politics, administration and industry contributed to help it reach the heights of its ascent. I dare not say the pinnacle of happiness because there is a divergence in opinion as to whether mankind today has reached the state of happiness and fortune to which he aspires. Whoever contemplates the crises which have beset society and the agitation which has swept over the ranks of man finds clear and ample proof that happiness is still far out of reach.

The second trait of this century is that it reared its head before it appeared in name. Although, on the tablets of history it only appeared in 1801, the 19th century was an infant of the French Revolution, born and nurtured amidst those well known pains and calamities. The spirit that has run its course through the past 100 years emanated from the gashes of that revolution. This is a stronger bond than Indian numerals and thus puts the beginning of the 19th century at 1789 when the flame of revolution that was ignited in Paris spread to the corners of the earth, breathing into the universe a new

All these matters, even if correct, do not support their view. Some of the principles of the revolution proved defective, and they had to be rejected after some trial and error. Others are still valid and beneficial for society but changing circumstances have made them no longer applicable, although the original principles from which others were derived still serve as a sound and solid base for humanity. These principles are the freedom of conscience, of speech, of association, the guarantee of the safety of the individual's life, spirit and property, the recourse to the opinion of the public concerning governments' comportment in serving the interests of society in all significant and momentous matters. These were the ultimate aims of the revolution. They have taken firm root and they cannot be shaken.

It is worth adding here that those whom the revolution has entrusted with its principles but who have not kept faith with it were destined to failure and ruin at the hand of these very principles that they failed to safeguard. Napoleon was a case in point. He was so obsessed with conquest that he pushed France from rightful defence to aggression on others.

It was with the two articles above that *Al-Ahram* bid farewell to the century that had just elapsed. The articles epitomise the restraint and understanding which distinguish *Al-Ahram* from other newspapers of the epoch.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

## Organising employment in Saudi Arabia

A NEW agreement was set between Saudi employment offices and local employment offices in other countries to put an end to disputes that often occur when employers refuse to abide by the conditions stated in the contract. The new agreement will also handle the problem of insufficient guarantees provided in the contract.

The labour contract will be approved by the ministries of interior, trade, labour and social affairs.

# MONEY & BUSINESS

## Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt Financial Statement Until 15th August 1996

Results in LE	As of 27/8/1995	As of 15/8/1996	Growth rate
Financial position	6270	6451	3
Clients deposits	4913	5045	3
Investment balance	5718	5879	3
Revenues	495	571	15
Net profits	73	82	12

Profits distributed for depositors totalled LE 71.5 million in comparison with LE 67.5 million last year. The number of companies which the bank established and in which it holds shares reached 38 companies operating in various fields.

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## CCI seal given to Ariel

WITH THE Cotton Council International (CCI) seal of quality on its package, Ariel Automatic has become the first Egyptian non-cotton product ever to be granted such an International certificate. This certificate is of special value in view of the distinguished status of the Cotton Council International Board being an international organisation with wide expertise in the field of cotton. For Ariel Automatic, receiving such international recognition was not an easy job. The CCI conducted comprehensive analysis and review for all experiments and scientific tests performed at independent laboratories, in order to ensure the efficiency of the product. The advantages provided by the product would definitely serve in enhancing the sales and promotion of cotton garments all over the world. Hence their certificate granted by the CCI gains special value as it comes from an unbiased international body, enjoying high credibility and aiming at providing the best advantages for cotton garments.

New communicative presentation concepts turn the spotlight on business-to-business dialogue to an increasing extent. A number of exhibitions within the fair, such as The World Online and Dealers Only, offer trendsetting communications platforms under one roof. This is where the direct exchange of information between trade visitors and exhibitors takes place. Within the framework of the International Congress, Systems presents the latest market trends and innovations in the information technology and telecommunications sectors in a clearly arranged and carefully structured form.

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## International Conference Centre under construction in Munich

THE INTERNATIONAL Conference Centre Munich (ICM), is a new multi-functional conference centre under construction as part of a project for the New Munich Trade Fair Centre.

The ICM will provide Messe München with an attractive, modern conference centre, ready for operation in autumn 1998. The ICM is integrated into the new Munich Trade Fair Centre and is intended to meet the higher requirements of modern-day information and communications. With its special atmosphere and stylish design in tune with modern standards, as well as its excellent infrastructure, the ICM will offer everything needed for holding successful events of almost any size and nature.

The new conference centre is designed for top functionality in all areas. There are 19 individual halls on three levels offering flexible arrangements to cater between 30 and 3,000 per-

participants, with a total seating capacity of 6,500.

The ICM is situated at the Main Entrance West of the New Munich Trade Fair Centre. It has its own entrance to enable congresses and conferences to take place both independently and in conjunction with the trade fairs.

With its 3,600 sq m ground-floor exhibition hall, an auditorium with seating for up to 1,500, many office rooms and further conference facilities, the ground floor of the conference building is optimally suited to the needs of modern conferences with accompanying facilities.

All event rooms are equipped with the latest lighting, sound and conference equipment and also have full air-conditioning and daylight. All the larger halls are equipped as standard with connection points for modern data transfer technology.

Exhibitors and visitors can reach the confer-

ence centre quickly and easily. The A-94 motorway links the trade fair site to the city centre 8 kilometres away, and with the motorway ring-road to the east, giving rapid access to all main areas.

The airport can be reached in about 30 minutes with the shuttle service. A new underground railway line currently under construction will have two stops at the main entrances, thus providing excellent public transportation links to the conference centre and trade fair site. The journey to the centre of Munich will take about 15 minutes.



Manfred Wenzhofer, president of Messe München

## Focus on Systems 96

EUROPE'S information technology (IT) experts and decision-makers are currently focusing their attention on the Systems fair. This international Trade Fair for the IT sector, to be held in Munich from 21-25 October 1996, will be one of the most important dates to mark on your calendar. Every autumn specialists, users and the European retail trade make their investment decisions for the coming year. In 1996, Systems is presenting the latest market trends and innovations in the information technology and telecommunications sectors in a clearly arranged and carefully structured form.

New communicative presentation concepts turn the spotlight on business-to-business dialogue to an increasing extent. A number of exhibitions within the fair, such as The World Online and Dealers Only, offer trendsetting communications platforms under one roof. This is where the direct exchange of information between trade visitors and exhibitors takes place. Within the framework of the International Congress, Systems presents the latest market trends and innovations in the information technology and telecommunications sectors in a clearly arranged and carefully structured form.

Also new at Systems 96 is Dealers Only, the number one meeting place for dealers and retailers in the information technology and telecommunications sectors. Dealers Only provides a unique meeting-point for dealers from all parts of Europe, enabling them to exchange information and ideas and to make contact with new market partners.

Visitors will also want to attend the accompanying lectures and presentations on subjects of topical interest in the fields of sales and marketing. And when the fair closes its doors at the end of the day, there will be special evening sessions at which dealers from all over Europe can have a "get-together".

See for yourself - at Systems 96 in Munich.



Ernst Kick, exhibition group director and head of information and communications services, Messe München



## Missive missiles

The pictures of George Bush, following the end of the Gulf War, have long since come down in Kurdish towns such as Arbil. And dreams of a unified Kurdish nation, as a result of a power struggle between the PUK and the PDK, were soon to follow.

After the Gulf War, the US, sketched a line in the sand, calling it the no-fly zone, and indirectly dared Saddam Hussein to cross it. Now that he has, Clinton responded by dropping several dozen cruise missiles on key Iraqi air installations, and with a sigh of relief, PUK leader Jalal Talabani sent a letter to the US president commanding him for his "noble act of courage."

But courage can often be interpreted as show-boating, especially when the actions in question do little more than threaten to destabilise the region and infringe on the territorial sovereignty of a nation, while exacerbating the damage inflicted on the people it was intended to help and those who stand innocent of a regime's decision-making policies. The Gulf War, after all, was fought precisely for this purpose — to protect the territorial integrity of a sovereign state, the rights of its people, and the welfare of the region as a whole. In this light, any action that seems to go against these parameters is likely to do more harm than good.

For years, the nations of the Middle East, in conjunction with Western powers like the US, have sought to hammer out a comprehensive regional peace settlement whose primary aim is to promote regional security and allow all its citizens a chance to prosper under efforts to integrate economically. Fundamental to these efforts has been the steadfast belief that each and every nation, as a sovereign state, has a responsibility to its neighbours, and the right to determine its own policies.

In this light, it makes little sense to infringe on the sovereignty of one state while attempting to secure that of another. And, with peace on the horizon, comprehensive efforts, based on the fact that freedom and self-determination are fundamental rights, must be undertaken by all, for the benefit of all.

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## Conference on terror



London is home to large numbers of extremists. But in refusing to take action against such groups, the British government is playing with fire, writes Ibrahim Nafie

A few days ago I received the following letter from Richard Makepeace, chargé d'affaires at the British Embassy in Cairo:

"Dear Mr Nafie,

I was astonished and concerned to read such false and hostile accusations in your edition of 31 August about the British government's attitude towards terrorism.

My government is determined to stamp out terrorism and co-operates closely with friendly governments, including the government of Egypt, in London on 8 September, the content and message of which we all deplore.

It is completely untrue to suggest that the British government is assisting or facilitating in the holding of a meeting of Islamic activists in London on 8 September, the content and message of which we all deplore.

But the fact is that no permission is required under British law to hold a private meeting on private premises. Nor is it an offence to voice opinions, however distasteful to the British government or other governments.

It is, of course, a serious offence to plan or commit terrorist acts. If the police find any evidence of such activity, they will act firmly and in accordance with British law.

To suggest to the contrary can only give false hopes and encouragement to those extremist and those terrorist groups both our governments are determined to defeat."

To the representative of the British crown in Egypt we must offer the response that no one puts much faith in what British officials say, particularly with regards to combating terrorism. It is also difficult to have confidence in the assurances they offer with regards to the problem Britain has itself created by allowing a conference promoting international terrorism to be held in its capital. Their attitude remains nonchalant, as if this were purely a question of legality, with no bearing on politics. They appear unconcerned about how the schemes concocted under their very noses might effect other nations and it bothers them little that British territory is being utilised to the detriment of the stability of other nations by elements proficient at

turning legal formalities to their own advantage.

Great Britain is becoming the world's number one base for supporting and sheltering terrorist groups operating against various parties in the Middle East and elsewhere. Yet the British government has participated in all recent meetings and conferences convened to halt the spread of international terrorist activity and British delegations were active in formulating and discussing a large number of measures to combat terrorism at the G7 Paris Summit, of which 25 were ratified.

The British government, at all conferences dealing with terrorism, has adopted strong positions, particularly when it feared its economic interests with Arab countries were at risk. We have to make life impossible for terrorists, the British prime minister declared while the home secretary reassured everyone who listened that his government is taking strong measures to urge countries to refuse to grant political asylum to supporters of terrorism.

Recent developments in the UK, though, show that the British government is not as earnest as it should be with regards to the battle against extre-

mism. The Islamic Liberation Party, notorious for its history of organisational and ideological connections with terrorism in the Middle East held its third annual meeting in Earls Court on 24 August with impunity. The meeting was attended by nearly 1,000 people. Also, the Muhamarran (the Immigrants), a splinter of the Islamic Liberation Party, has begun to organise a conference to which some 14,000 people have been invited, including well-known leaders from the Arab world.

The conference, due to be held in London on 9 September, is not just another opposition rally, of which London hosts so many. It is an occasion that has profound ramifications regarding a dangerous phenomenon that threatens international stability, and as such one would not expect it to be handled in the context of established, sovereign laws that cannot be violated. Rather one would expect it to be treated in light of the increasingly dangerous levels of support for extremist activity in the UK. It is little wonder, therefore, that prominent members of the House of Commons (both Conservative and Labour) have protested against the holding of

such a conference in the UK.

This policy has several aims: to contain any damage to the host country's interests, to embrace the countries in which these elements operate and to become better informed about them in the event that they may someday come to power. Evidently, these countries have yet to learn the lesson other countries have already been taught. It is impossible to make a deal with extremist and terrorist elements and maintain credibility or respect within the international community. One only hopes that government officials learn this lesson quickly before their actions lead to graver consequences.

## Bill and Bibi at poll politics

Will Netanyahu have better luck in affecting the US presidential elections than Clinton had with the Israeli poll? Mohamed Sid-Ahmed discusses the issue

After Netanyahu won the Israeli elections despite President Clinton's efforts to ensure the success of his rival, editorials in leading US newspapers sought to play down the differences between the two men by underscoring what they had in common. Much was made of the fact that they are approximately the same age, that both belong to a new generation of leaders born after World War II, that both were brought up in the United States and share a common cultural background where nicknames are widely used even at the highest levels of government. This impression was further bolstered by the press coverage of the first meeting between the two men, which was described as a meeting between Bill and Bibi. But the lack of rapport between the two leaders was all too apparent, and while some put this down to bad chemistry, I believe the problem goes deeper than that.

Traditionally, the Democratic Party has been the mainstay of the Jewish lobby in the United States, while Clinton himself, who enjoys a majority in Congress since the 1994 elections, have come out strongly in support of Israel's hawks, as borne out by the standing ovation with which Netanyahu's uncompromising address to the two Houses was met, especially when he vowed to oppose any attempt to divide Jerusalem, which he claimed as "Israel's eternal capital".

Arab parties see Clinton's reluctance to condemn Netanyahu's disavowal of the peace formula, notably on the Syrian front, as a sign that the American president is giving in to Netanyahu's pressure instead of forcing him to honour Israel's previous commitments towards the peace process. They are also deeply troubled by the fact that, even as he turns a blind eye to the dangers inherent in Netanyahu's flouting of the principles on which the peace process is based, Clinton is giving in to Netanyahu's pressure instead of forcing him to honour Israel's previous commitments towards the peace process. They are also deeply troubled by the fact that, even as he turns a blind eye to the dangers inherent in Netanyahu's flouting of the principles on which the peace process is based, Clinton is giving in to Netanyahu's pressure instead of forcing him to honour Israel's previous commitments towards the peace process. 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**Close up**

Salama A. Salama

**Paralympic triumphs**

The success of the Egyptian team at the Paralympics appears not to have aroused much interest among those commentators who lamented the wretched performance of the Egyptian team in Atlanta. None of the critics, sports writers or commentators who condemned Egypt's sports policy for not producing champion athletes in any event of the Olympic Games have wondered, in print at least, how Egypt's disabled athletes brought home a harvest of 30 medals, and in the process set 15 world records.

Indeed the opposite happened. Sports writers, their papers and magazines, have gone back to their favourite hobby, making a fuss of football. Endless wearisome photographs of footballing "stars" occupy their usual prominent place on covers, while news of the Paralympic success was buried deep in the inside pages. Does anyone know anything about these champions' struggles for recognition? From where they come, how they climbed the ladder of success, how they became disabled and how they overcome their handicaps? What was the driving force that pushed them to the very top and enabled them to surmount the obstacles and challenges they faced?

Of course none of our sports writers thought of investigating such questions, though the answers that these athletes might give could well provide the basis for correcting Egypt's other sporting disaster.

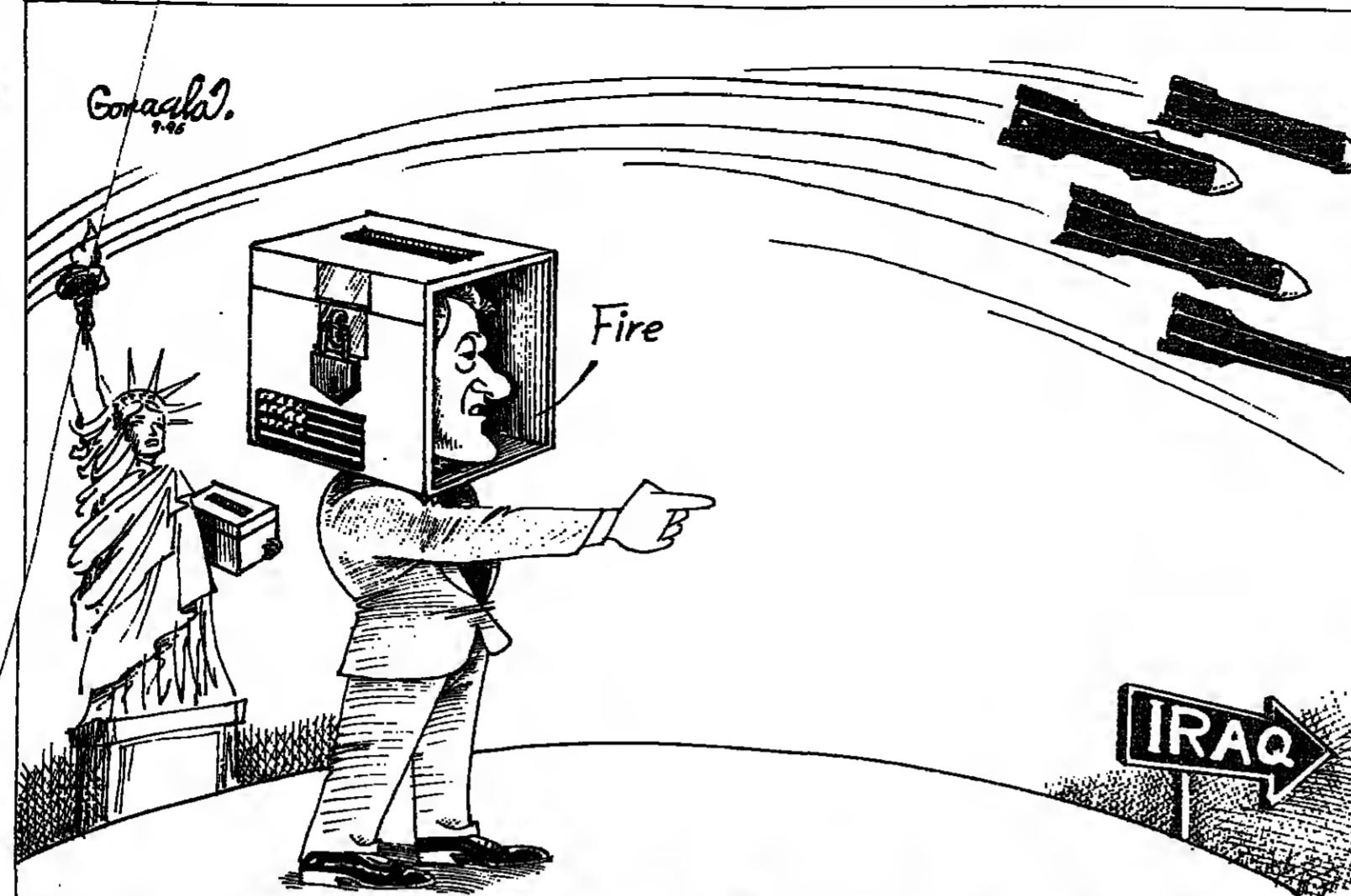
I do not think that the success of Egyptian athletes at the Paralympics is due to the institutions governing their training and their administration. Sports federations in Egypt are all made in the same mould, with the same weaknesses. To my mind their success is due to the challenges individual competitors perceive, the hurdles that they must overcome, and the respect that they have to struggle so hard to obtain.

Those who have searched for the secret behind the incredible, record-breaking success of Egypt's disabled athletes have tended to point to the nature of the modern, physical culture that places such emphasis on achievement. Certainly human beings, in contrast to animals, are always searching for recognition and appreciation, as Hegel rightly pointed out.

Able-bodied athletes who win prizes in other countries are subjected to extremely rigorous training systems alongside the incentives — both financial and in terms of prestige — that come with breaking each new record. But disabled athletes have an even greater incentive, the desire to compensate for physical disability by attaining such a degree of excellence that will bring personal satisfaction and the appreciation which others so often withhold.

So does this mean that the athletes taking part in the Paralympics were more mature psychologically than those taking part in Atlanta, or that our society produces disabled people with more competitive spirits and a greater determination to meet the challenges they face, than the able-bodied?

Those responsible for education and sports in Egypt would do well to explore such questions. For the simple fact remains — from the Paralympics Egyptians brought home 30 medals, while from Atlanta they returned empty-handed.



## **Far beyond reason and rigour**

Suppressing opinions with which rulers are uncomfortable can no longer be cloaked in the rhetoric of national liberation, writes **Edward Said**

I recall quite vividly that when I was about 14 or 15 and living in Egypt the films of Elizabeth Taylor — whom I've always considered one of the world's worst actresses — were banned. The reasons given at the time were not aesthetic but that she was considered to be a Zionist supporter and therefore somehow unfit to grace Egyptian cinema screens. I also recall that during the fifties and early sixties, well after the revolution had been established, copies of various foreign magazines like *Time* and *The Economist* would often arrive in Cairo with passages about Egypt or Israel — at that time Israel was referred to only as "the Zionist entity" — carefully inked out on the page because they were deemed offensive by the censor. That government employees should spend hours going through magazines removing politically incorrect passages seemed like a lot of work at the time, but was accepted as an aspect of national security.

I also remember that during the '60s, while I was working on my PhD in literature, I would often spend the summer in Lebanon at my family's house reading and writing. I would regularly air freight a large parcel of books to Beirut via Pan Am, and then would reclaim them at Beirut airport a few days later. Each time I did that, however, I would have to carry the heavy bundle over to a censorship office where my books and I were examined — the operation took about ten minutes — for possible evidence or traces of Zionism. On one occasion I was asked by a burly employee of what was then the Sureté Generale whether there was anything in my books (the poems of Keats and Wordsworth, novels by Fielding, Sterne, Stendhal and Thackeray) about Israel, as with one hand he held one of them upside down.

The situation changed somewhat after 1967, a result of the Palestinian Revolution, as we then called it, which made possible a new, self-critical style and rhetoric in politics. Research articles on Israel and the Arabs were published complete with footnotes (a new thing at the time). Frankness became permissible, and articulation of criticism about the past and various leaders was openly practised in Beirut. I do not mean to suggest that everything became liberal and open; indeed I recall how Yasser Arafat during the early seventies sent an armoured car to the home of Elias Khoury, then working as an editor of *Shu'un Filastinyya*, because of something he had written which had offended Arafat. But Lebanon was not the Arab world. Censorship continued to exist elsewhere, although perhaps on not so ridiculous a scale as in the pre-1967 years.

The point I am trying to make is that after 1948 at least two generations of Arabs were gradually inculcated with the idea that part of our struggle as a people required the suppression not only of certain unwelcome and un-

pleasant actualities by our rulers who disapproved of them but were otherwise powerless to do much about them, but also that we ourselves as a people should accept the principle that our duty as citizens was to acquiesce in the abrogation of our right to freedom of thought and expression.

No society is entirely free of control over thought and expression, though not all such control is instituted and maintained by the government. I think it is quite true in the US that certain things cannot be easily said or written — for years it was impossible to say anything critical about Israel, and even today it is virtually impossible to publish material from a Palestinian point of view in major American journals of opinion — but there is no American ministry of information or government office of censorship. People and organisations can be banned (as the PLO was for many years) but there was always popular, outspoken resistance to the prohibition. Freedom of expression is therefore relative but it must, in my opinion, be protected by law and by the constitution. Otherwise what can be said or written — and finally, thought — is subject to the whims, opinions, moods and personal interests of the ruler.

In the West relative freedom of expression was won over a long period of time, the result of a contest first between the land-owning aristocracy and the monarchy, then as the result of a contest between that aristocracy and the middle classes. This has not been the case in most, if not all, Arab countries where executive authority dominates even the constitution and the state's written laws, and the middle class remains at best a commercial and professional but not really a political class. When it comes to the regulation of expression, whether for civil or religious reasons, the prevailing situation in the Arab world is almost comic, since electronic communication, travel, and reality itself defy the ridiculous structures imposed by the religious and secular authorities. But the practice of censorship still exists, and is often violently maintained, at far too great an expense, in our societies. I have yet to hear or read a real defence of censorship, even though large numbers of journalists languish in Arab prisons, and an estimable number of artists and intellectuals pay the price through exile, torture or an imposed silence. The point is that while no Arab constitution countenances censorship, the ban on certain statements is still severely enforced. No ruler really ever wants to get into a debate about censorship, because censorship cannot withstand the clear light of reason, or the rigours of debate. Censorship hides in the dark, rarely explains itself fully, always shuns public discussion, remains a silent, cringing orphan. My books have been

banned in Palestine for almost a month, yet no one has taken responsibility for the order to confiscate and remove them from bookstores.

There are two especially troubling aspects of the practice of censorship as it exists today in Arab societies. One is that it does not work. It has not made one regime better, one ruler more loved, one army more efficient, one newspaper or university more up-to-date, one society more secure and modern. Its damage, even to the regimes that enforce it, is incalculable. It has made Arab societies as a whole the least democratic on earth. It has disrupted and discouraged every Arab who today is ashamed even to be an Arab. It has lost us untold riches in spirit broken, in talents exiled, in research, exploration, thought left untried, all because of the prohibition on free debate and discussion. It has turned people away from their governments and individuals away from other individuals. The question is then why, since it does not work, is censorship still there?

This is the second and more disquieting aspect of censorship in Arab societies today. The fact is that as individuals we can no longer evade responsibility for our own social evils, or for the governments and rulers that are either unjust or unresponsive to the real needs of the majority. Censorship exists because many individuals collaborate with it: individuals who censor themselves, who say it is better to be inside a regime trying to do good than to be outside and marginal. Individuals who say what difference does it make if I allow myself to be censored since after all the world goes on. Everyone complains privately, but few, very few — writers like Nasr Hamid Abu Zeid or Laith Stilbhallat — take the next step and say what no one else is willing to say in public. Above all, we accept censorship as we do nearly everything else that has been forced on us in this miserable, damp, gloomy period of mediocrity and defeat, because we say that we are powerless, the world is against us, Zionism and imperialism have won. We are told that we must be realistic and pragmatic — a nauseating word as it is used by our leading policy intellectuals to justify their own compromises. Baathists or Marxists one day, advisers to presidents and princes the next — we have been told, we must realise that we have no alternative, etc etc.

There can be no meaningful compromise on censorship, on the banning of books and ideas, on the imprisonment and torture of critics or opponents of the regime. The time has come to hold the practice and the theory up to the scrutiny of reason and light, and to ask publicly why censorship is still necessary and whether it would be better for all Arabs to do away with it entirely.

and to say that as prospective citizens of the 21st century we are entitled to say what we want and read what is available to be read, and enough of all this nonsense about security and danger and protecting ourselves against some imagined outside enemy.

Elizabeth Taylor is still before the public despite being hammed in Egypt. *Time* and *The Economist* still publish their opinions 40 years after they were censored. But look at us. Have we not become comic figures, floundering in the mean suburbs and dark corridors while the rest of mankind marches on under the sun?

Nowhere is this more true than in Palestine, where Yasir Arafat and his Authority use censorship not just to silence and threaten opponents of his policies but also to hide his past mistakes from discussion and accountability. He accepted an agreement with Israel that said nothing about Palestinian self-determination on the one hand, and tacitly accepted occupation and the settlements on the other. For the past three years his partners Rabin and Peres have been building and expanding settlements; they have sealed the fate of Arab Jerusalem; they have destroyed the Palestinian economy and corrupted its political class; they have imposed military rule on areas B and C, and have simply walked away with over 90 per cent of the land. All of this with Mr. Arafat's cooperation. After Netanyahu came to power and exposed the peace process for the fraud it always was, Arafat is pleading without dignity or credibility with anyone who will listen that he needs help. All the while his security forces torture and kill anyone who objects to his colossal failures as leader. He announces a four-hour general strike, which will hurt no one except his people (Israelis don't do their shopping in Ramallah and Nablus), and he urges people to go to Jerusalem on their own to pray. This man has learned nothing from any of the non-violent struggles against imperialism, has taken nothing from Gandhi or from Martin Luther King, and has never understood the meaning of armed struggle as practised by the Vietnamese or the Algerians. The South African experience means nothing to Arafat. What he should be doing now — instead of strengthening his power inside Palestine like the incompetent general that he is — is to lead a series of non-violent demonstrations against the settlements, announce publicly that he does not want to fight Israelis but the bricks and stones of their settlements and that he will do so unarmed, leading his people in large numbers, instead of sitting behind his guards and his palaces in Ramallah and Gaza. We should all speak out against a policy that will cost us the rest of Palestine unless it is changed, and unless the leadership is forced to change or be gone.

## **Past failures, new realities and necessary lessons**

Is Arab nationalism doomed to become just another cultural project? **Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed** joins the fray and, in the first of a two-part article, examines some of the lessons Arabs have to learn if political Arabism is to survive

Until a few weeks ago, most observers of the political scene in the Arab world might have thought that Arab nationalism as a political force to reckon with has, for all practical purposes, ended forever. Israeli troops could do as they pleased in Lebanon, and their government could impose the harshest of conditions upon the Arab people of the Occupied Territories, with no sign whatsoever that other Arab peoples cared much about what was happening to fellow Arabs in southern Lebanon or Palestine.

On the contrary, Arab governments in the Mashreq and the Maghreb alike were courting the Israeli government, not only exchanging visits with Israeli officials, but also promoting trade links with Israel, even links which would prove harmful to other Arab countries. Arab citizens, also, were rushing to visit Israel, for tourism, medical care and in search of lucrative deals with Israeli businessmen. The plight of both the Iraqi and Libyan peoples, subject to oppressive and unfair UN economic sanctions, did not stir any angry reactions in the Arab world beyond verbal declarations of support for the two peoples.

This situation has not been reversed completely since then. President Mubarak's call for a meeting of Arab heads of state, to discuss ways of dealing with a new Israeli government, which makes no secret of its intention to maintain occupation of the Arab territories, received an immediate favourable response. The meeting's relatively successful conclusion demonstrated that Arab leaders are still sufficiently concerned with the consequences of the Israeli government's new position to rally promptly. It would therefore be no exaggeration to assume that the response of the Arab leaders echoed the sentiments of their own peoples, who felt the same concern. There are also signs that the meeting in Cairo was supported by nearly all shades of Arab public opinion. One may conclude, therefore, that Arab nationalism is not completely dead at the end of the twentieth century. Perhaps it is not very well, but definitely it is still alive.

The end of Arabism was announced in the early 1980s. The prediction that Arab nationalism would soon enter its last gasp — or, indeed, had already done so — became fashionable; it was renewed with much vigour in the 1990s. This pre-emptive announcement, however, may not be well-founded. Arabism is basically an ex-

pression of a common culture, which cannot simply vanish because a certain Arab leader went against the Arab consensus not to recognise Israel and concluded a separate peace. Arabism, in this sense, will continue to exist, even when denied by the Arabs. So long as they continue to speak the same language, listen to the same songs, admire the same writers and cherish common values, Arabism will be alive, despite political divergence among Arab governments.

Arab nationalists will find scant consolation in the idea of Arabism as basically a cultural phenomenon. For them, Arabism should be viewed as a political movement aiming at the realisation of some sort of unity among Arab peoples. That unity, as understood in the 1950s, could only consist in the full merger of two states under one centralised administration, with one army, one currency, the same legislation, etc. Even a federal state would not be accepted as an appropriate version of this ideal. Those who dared to suggest that such unity could be achieved through a federal state or a confederation were denounced as traitors of the Arab cause. Governments headed by advocates of such total unions did not hesitate, in the 1950s, to put those who espoused "dissident" views in prison.

If Arabism is to remain as anything other than a cultural project in the 21st century, however, it will have to adapt to new realities in Arab societies themselves, in the region, and in the world surrounding the Arabs. Advocates of Arab nationalism should also ponder the lessons they can learn from their own 20th-century experiences, particularly their failures.

The first lesson which Arab nationalists would do well to ponder is their own failure in attaining the lofty goals they set for themselves. They strove to achieve national independence for Arab countries in the 1960s, a socialist path to development and Arab unity. The '60s ended with the territories of two of the countries ruled by nationalist regimes (Syria and Egypt) under foreign occupation. In the second case occupation lasted a decade and half, it continues in the first. Two other radical nationalist regimes, those of Iraq and Libya, are currently suffering the consequences of their own policies, which were a pretext by the US, the architect of Arab nationalism, to impose harsh economic sanctions upon their peoples. Whatever may have happened to so-

cialism in eastern Europe during the late 1980s and early '90s, the policies of Arab nationalist regimes from the 1960s onward hardly conformed with the noble ideals of humanistic socialism. Very often, the old classes were simply replaced by the new class of senior military officers and bureaucrats. As for the goal of Arab unity, these regimes not only failed to set an example for other Arab countries, they were also unable to see eye to eye themselves. The breakdown of the Federation of Arab Republics of Egypt, Syria and Iraq in 1963, and rivalry between the two Baathist regimes in Syria and Iraq since 1968 are only two of many examples of the gulf between the slogans of Arab nationalists and their practices.

These failures, however, do not imply that the goals themselves were flawed. The ideals of national independence, a just society and Arab unity are worthy of being pursued at the end of the twentieth century, but their meaning and the ways of attaining them should be reconsidered in light of past failures and new realities in Arab countries, the region and the world.

These new realities are characterised by several important features.

The accelerated pace of the scientific and technological revolution in the second half of this century entailed vast changes in the international division of labour, distribution of economic power among nations and the legitimacy of many regimes. Under the impact of this revolution, it became difficult for any regime to live up to its increasingly literate citizens for a long time about its practices or its achievements. Arab citizens can know the truth through an easily accessible international media. They can equally easily compare their regimes' alleged achievements with those of other countries, which they can visit, or at least know about through the media.

The second feature relates to the new power configuration Arab nationalists now face in the international community. Major capitalist countries dominate the world, and set the agenda of nearly all international bodies through meetings of the Group of Seven. Among these countries, the US uses its combined economic, military and diplomatic capabilities and to its special interest in Middle Eastern affairs. The experience of the past few years, including the second Gulf crisis, has demonstrated the difficulty of resolving any important matter in the region without US consent.

The writer is a professor of political science at Cairo University.

## **Soapbox**

### **Syria's likely scenario**

The possibility of Syrian-Israeli tensions erupting into conflict — the central argument of an article sent to me by Professor Ze'ev Maoz, the director of Jaffa Strategic Studies Centre at the University of Tel Aviv, published in *Ha'aretz* and subsequently distorted in the Egyptian press — has escalated.

The direction of recent events, including the election of Netanyahu as prime minister, and the fact that unlike the Palestinians Syria is not tied by any binding agreements with Israel, indicates two likely scenarios.

The first assumes that negotiations on the Palestinian track are resumed, the Golan remains indefinitely occupied, and the rest of the Arab world remains silent giving only minimal support to Syria as it engages in war with Israel. The second scenario assumes that Arab-Israeli relations are strained, particularly with the Palestinians and Jordanians, allowing Syria to assume leadership of the Palestinians, and even the Jordanians, before declaring war on Israel.

The two scenarios elaborated in the article, however, are based on false premises, and neither is particularly convincing. Both isolate Syria from collective Arab action, bank on Arab narcissism, overstate Israel's military might and undermine the effect of changes that have taken, and are taking, place at the regional and global level.

Given the tremendous pressures on Israel, from within and without, to pursue the peace process to completion any attempts to hold on to the Golan Heights indefinitely are likely to cause a confrontation on both the political and military fronts. Support for Syria is then unlikely to be limited to financial and military assistance. Rather, the whole region will be drawn into a devastating war which will automatically involve both the US and Europe, with unpredictable results.

This week's Soapbox speaker is an expert at the National Centre for Middle East Studies.

**Maj. Gen. A. Abdel-Halim**



## Theatrical encounters

**Above:** the opening ceremony of the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre, 1 September. Right: Walid Aouni's *The Last Interview*, based on the life and work of painter Tahya Halim, was performed on the opening

night. The play is one of the Egyptian entries in the competition. This, the eighth round of the festival, features productions from 53 countries (see programme below). The festival ends on 11 September.

## Cinema

# The price of representation

**Afari El-Asphalt**, Ossama Fawzi's debut film, was screened at the Locarno Film Festival. **Mohamed El-Assiouty** examines the reception accorded the film at its premiere in Egypt

Scriptwriter Mustafa Zikri and director Ossama Fawzi were the youngest filmmakers to be represented in competition at this year's Narrative Film Festival. Since then they have scored ever greater success with their debut film, *Afari El-Asphalt*, which was featured at the Locarno Film Festival (see opposite).

When it was first screened in Egypt the film met with general critical approval, though there were exceptions. The choice of subject, the director's reliance on unknown actors rather than depending on a box-office star, and the sheer persistence of the filmmakers in their two-year struggle to find sponsors were mostly deemed praiseworthy.

The film uses layers of narrative in order to articulate the complex social contracts entered into by a variety of characters. The icing on the narrative's flaky pastry is provided by the fantastic stories told by a barber, and occasionally a shoe shine man, tales which mirror the more mundane experiences of the characters themselves.

Not that the lives of the characters are banal. They are all caught in an intricate web of liaisons whose overlaps, points of connection and departure are all conveniently choreographed to allow the protagonists room to get on with the business of living. This is the world view from a microcosm with the driver as hero. In this world a man can sleep with the wife of his neighbour, because the neighbour is sleeping with his mother. His father, too, is carrying on an affair with another neighbour, leaving his sister little choice but to en-

ter into a relationship with his best friend. And everything is a great unspoken secret that everyone knows, or should know if they paused for a second or two to think about it. They all cheat on each other, but do so as if by unspoken agreement. What is done is done secretly, because it is not named. The only naming occurs in the fabulous tales of the barber and shoe shine man.

In Egypt some viewers thought this story telling aspect of the film a little overdone, while others found the seemingly inexhaustible libido of characters either trying or shocking. They were critical of which the director, Ossama Fawzi, appeared well prepared to deal.

"I am sorry some people found the stories boring," he said, at one post-screening debate. "Of course, they are not meant to tire the audience. Part of the problem, I think, is simply one of familiarity. People are not yet used to this type of narrative structure, and so tend to switch off. And as for the sexual element in the story, the intention was not to dramatise an act of control libido, merely to emphasise the conspiracy and collaboration which, even if unspoken, is a prerequisite of such activity. Not every character agrees with what the others are doing, but they all conspire to allow these things to happen."

*Afari El-Asphalt* is, one film critic stated, "a hand book of innocence" despite its supposedly explicit content. Certainly it deals with subjects that very seldom get an airing on the Egyptian screen, including that great, un-

spoken taboo, homosexuality, another secret that everybody knows.

"It is an unusual subject in Egyptian cinema," says Rafiq El-Sabbani, "though in this instance it was not employed in an exaggerated manner. The two characters, both of whom are implied to be homosexual, are a shoe shiner and someone with obvious mental handicaps. Both are characters whose social skills are extremely limited, and both are portrayed as being terminally frustrated. What I cannot understand, though, are the objections that the inclusion of these two characters provoked. Handicapped people, I am afraid, tend to be exploited. This is a fact. A more reasonable vehicle for outrage would be less the statement of such facts than their suppression. Poverty, oppression, and the need to dream, of a profession?"

These are questions that have long dogged Egyptian cinema, and which must return to haunt any director who seeks to move beyond the established genres of commercial film.

"*Was Afari El-Asphalt* made to be shown here or in Cannes?" The question, posed by critic Ihab Lahin, was intended to be rhetorical.

The answer seems obvious. It was made to be shown here. And what, one wonders, did the audience in Locarno make of Fawzi's film? Did they see it as a generalised portrayal of an entire class, a statement that everyone in Egypt is an adulterer, that microbus drivers in Cairo are all sexual maniacs, and that every shoe-shiner is homosexual? Of course not. It would be judged as a feature film, not as a documentary.

And why are people so personally affected by such stories?

At one point during a post-screening debate one member of the audience rose to his feet, grabbed the microphone and announced that he was a microbus driver, and that the film was not about him. Well, exactly.

"What I presented is what I believe exists," insists the director. "Look at the film — any act, and you'll find accidents a hundred times worse than those in my movie."

And why, indeed, should a film that borrows elements of its narrative structure from *A Thousand and One Nights*, replete with fantastic story telling, be perceived as being a realistic or propagandistic description of a class or even of a profession?

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## Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre: Programme

**Thu, 5 Sept**  
4.30pm: *Blues Train*, South Africa, Small Hall, Opera House.  
6.00pm: *Pantomima*, Romania, George Abiad, National Theatre.  
7.00pm: *Intimacy*, Egypt, Abdel-Reheim El-Zorkani; *Martyrs Come Back*, Palestine, Salah Abd-el-Sabour  
8.00pm: *Arrival of Sailors*, Brazil, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *Cul-de-sac*, Netherlands, El-Ghouri Experimental Theatre  
9.00pm: *Chairs*, Lebanon, El-Salam; 1/8 min. Mar., Switzerland, Zaki Tolaimat; *As y'Abi Zaid*, Jordan, El-Ghouri; *Macbeth*, Ukraine, El-Manager Galleria; *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Portugal, El-Ghouri Cultural Palace  
10.00pm: *Dreams About Cleopatra*, Ukraine, Open Air Theatre, Opera Grounds; *Oar and Roses*, Czech Republic, Wiktor El-Ghouri; *Lear*, Egypt, Salah Abd-el-Sabour  
8.00pm: *The Symphony of Lear*, Egypt, El-Ghouri

**Experimental Hall**  
8.30pm: *Arrival of Sailors*, Brazil, Floating Theatre, Small Hall  
9.00pm: *A Man and a Woman*, Tunisia, George Abiad, National Theatre; *I Wanna be Loved by You*, Belarus, Puppet Theatre; *Games in the Backyard*, Albania, Mohamed Farid; *The Book of Reflections*, Switzerland, Abdel-Reheim El-Zorkani; *Scapin's Tricks*,atarstan, El-Ghouri; *Desertscape*, Egypt, El-Manager Galleria  
5.00pm: *A Man and o Woman*, Tunisia, George Abiad, National Theatre  
7.00pm: *The Book of Reflections*, Switzerland, Abdel-Reheim El-Zorkani; *Radw*, Egypt, Salah Abd-el-Sabour  
7.30pm: *I Wanna be Loved by You*, Belarus, Puppet Theatre  
8.00pm: *Endless World*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *The Last Days of Abyai Khan*, Kazakhstan, Said Darwish Hall  
8.30pm: *Time Sailors*, Austria, George Abiad, National Theatre; *The Adventure of Mamluke Gaber's Head*, Kuwait, El-Salam; *Chariot of Gods*, Cameron, Mohamed Farid; *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *Endless World*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *The Last Days of Abyai Khan*, Kazakhstan, Said Darwish Hall  
8.30pm: *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *Endless World*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *The Last Days of Abyai Khan*, Kazakhstan, Said Darwish Hall  
8.30pm: *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *3,000 Verscunnia*, Portugal, Open Air Theatre, Opera Grounds; *Sold*, Saudi Africa, El-Ghouri Cultural Palace  
9.00pm: *Time Sailors*, Austria, George Abiad, National Theatre

**Man Who Wished**, Netherlands, Small Hall, Opera House; *Liberation*, Bahrain, El-Ghouri Cultural Palace; *Fear*, Oman, Said Darwish  
10.00pm: *Youself the Tiger*, Egypt, Open Air Theatre, Opera Grounds  
**Sun, 5 Sept**  
12.00pm: *Desertscape*, Egypt, El-Manager Galleria  
5.00pm: *The Adventure of Mamluke Gaber's Head*, Kuwait, El-Salam; *Chariot of Gods*, Cameron, Mohamed Farid; *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *Endless World*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *The Last Days of Abyai Khan*, Kazakhstan, Said Darwish Hall  
8.30pm: *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *Endless World*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *The Last Days of Abyai Khan*, Kazakhstan, Said Darwish Hall  
8.30pm: *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *3,000 Verscunnia*, Portugal, Open Air Theatre, Opera Grounds; *Hassan and Noima*, Egypt, Wiktor El-Ghouri  
9.00pm: *Time Sailors*, Austria, George Abiad, National Theatre

**Mon, 6 Sept**  
5.00pm: *Solo*, Germany, Puppet Theatre  
6.30pm: *Edith Piaf*, Latvia, Abdel-Reheim El-Zorkani; *Archives*, Saudi Arabia, El-Salam; *O, Tree Climber*, Egypt, Zaki Tolaimat; *Caspas*, Egypt, Salab Abd-el-Sabour  
8.00pm: *Alifakovac*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Salab Abd-el-Sabour; *Half Open*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *Carmina Burana*, Poland, El-Manager Centre —  
9.00pm: *Time Sailors*, Austria, George Abiad, National Theatre; *The Adventure of Mamluke Gaber's Head*, Kuwait, El-Salam; *Chariot of Gods*, Cameron, Mohamed Farid; *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *Endless World*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *The Last Days of Abyai Khan*, Kazakhstan, Said Darwish Hall  
8.30pm: *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *Endless World*, Czech Republic, Floating Theatre, Small Hall; *The Last Days of Abyai Khan*, Kazakhstan, Said Darwish Hall  
8.30pm: *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
8.00pm: *3,000 Verscunnia*, Portugal, Open Air Theatre, Opera Grounds; *Hassan and Noima*, Egypt, Wiktor El-Ghouri  
9.00pm: *Time Sailors*, Austria, George Abiad, National Theatre

**Wed, 7 Sept**  
12.00pm: *Mannequin Party*, Egypt, George Abiad National Theatre; *Rockaby*, Germany, Abdel-Reheim El-Zorkani; *Archives*, Saudi Arabia, El-Salam; *O, Tree Climber*, Egypt, Zaki Tolaimat; *Caspas*, Egypt, Salab Abd-el-Sabour; *The Prisoner*, Pakistan, Puppet Theatre; *Byzantium*, Russia, El-Ghouri  
9.30pm: *Expression*, Indonesia, Zaki Tolaimat; *Solo*, Germany, Puppet Theatre; *Chariot of Gods*, Cameron, Mohamed Farid; *Electra*, Greece, Small Hall, Opera House; *Merchant of Dreams*, Tunisia, El-Ghouri  
10.00pm: *3,000 Verscunnia*, Portugal, Open Air Theatre, Opera Grounds; *Hassan and Noima*, Egypt, Wiktor El-Ghouri  
11.00pm: *Time Sailors*, Austria, George Abiad, National Theatre

**Tue, 8 Sept**  
4.30pm: *The Lesson*, Russia, El-Manager Galleria  
7.00pm: *Rockaby*, Germany, Abdel-Reheim El-Zorkani; *Archives*, Saudi Arabia, El-Salam; *Caspas*, Egypt, Salab Abd-el-Sabour  
11.00pm: *Africa Immigrant*, Morocco, Small Hall, Opera House

All information correct at time of going to press.

## Listings

### EXHIBITIONS

**Anas Baghigian**  
Espace Gallery, 1, El-Sherif, Tel 763 9224, Daily 10am-2pm & 5pm-9am, 11-21 Sep.  
Recent paintings, including works based on the poetry of Constantine Cavafy, under the title *Pour Une Rencore*.

**Group Show**  
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champlain St, Downtown, Tel 578 4494, Daily exc Fri, 10am-5pm.  
Show featuring the works of artists who have exhibited at the gallery over the past six years, including Adel El-Sawi, Fathi Hassan, Ibrahim El-Haddad and Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

**Regards Croisés (Paintings)**  
Hotel Sofitel, Heliopolis, Tel 442 366, Until the end of the month.  
Works by Sawsan Mahmoud, Li Vspert and Hemet Rayan.

**Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information given is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas.**

**El-Zaman Wat-Khal** (The Age of Dogs)  
Casino II, 12 Emadoddin St, Downtown, Tel 779 537, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Tiba Al-Nasr, Tel 267 2616, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Talaat Harb, Tel 503 5723, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Igthiyar (Assassination)**  
Zahrat Palaces, 17 El-Ahly St, Zamalek, Downtown, Tel 924 27, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Thur Sat midnight show.  
El-Harara, El-Harara St, Giza, Tel 385 8358, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Tahrir, Tel 355 5726, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Thur Sat midnight show.  
MGMC, Maadi Grand Metropole, El-Maadi St, Tel 324 0254, Daily 12.30-3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm; Thur Sat midnight show.  
Tahrir St, Tel 352 0060, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Central I, 12 Emadoddin St, Tel 779 537, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Tahrir II, Tel 573 5033, Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Egyptian Museum**  
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo, Tel 362 8766, Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 1pm-3pm.

Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic world.

**Nasser '56**  
Nassarawy, 31 El-Ahram St, Tel 250 0254, Daily 12.30-3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm; Thur Sat midnight show.  
El-Harara, El-Harara St, Giza, Tel 385 8358, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm; Tahrir, Tel 355 5726, Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Nasser '56**  
Nassarawy, 31 El-Ahram St, Tel 250 0254, Daily 12.30-3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm; Thur Sat midnight show.  
MGMC, Maadi Grand Metropole, El-Maadi St, Tel 324 0254, Daily 12.30-3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

**El-Sisi Hood**  
Sayed Darwisch Theatre, Alexandria, Tel 482 5802, 482 5106.

The National Theatre production transfers to Alexandria for the summer.

**Belle (Panther)**  
Medina Nasr Theatre, Youssef Al-Ahly St, Medina Nasr, Tel 402 0804, Daily 10pm.

Starring Sabah El-Saeed and directed by Samir El-Astori.

**Zamalek** (El-Saeed)

Zamalek El-Saeed, Tel 355 5726, Daily 9pm.

**Massa' (High Heels)**  
Radio Theatre, 24 Al-Ahly St, Downtown, Tel 575 1562, Daily exc Tues, 8.30pm; Wed & Thurs, 10pm.

Starring Laila El-Saeed, Sheikha Shahnaz and Hossam El-Saeed.

**Massa America**  
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, Qasr El-Nil St, Tel 575 0761, Daily 10pm.

Directed by and starring Mohamed Sobhi.

**Rehab** (El-Saeed)

Rehab in Le Caire, Tel 575 1562, Daily exc Tues, 8.30pm; Wed & Thurs, 10pm.

With Samir Ghoneim and El-Saeed.

**Hazzam Ya**  
El-Gezira Theatre, Al-Saad, Al-Saad, Tel 364 4160, Daily 10pm, Fri & Sun, 8.30pm.

Starring Fifi Abdou, directed by Sameh Astour.

**El-Gamil Wel-Welakha**  
(The Beautiful and the Ugly)

Zamalek Theatre, 13 Sheqayat El-Darr St, Zamalek, Tel 341 6569.

Daily exc Wed, 10pm.

**Locarno is fast becoming one of the most prestigious and comprehensive film festivals in the world. It is one of the few film festivals that recognises that new cinema from the third world is of enormous interest, and that provides cineastes from around the world the opportunity to get together and talk seriously away from the hoopla that surrounds the more commercial festivals, events high on glitter, low on cinema.**

**Mohamed Shebl attended the festival and reports on its high points, including the Youssef Chahine retrospective**



"The biggest screen in the world", a prominent feature of the Locarno Film Festival, erected in the city's main square

## A place in the piazza



Hind Rostom and Youssef Chahine in *Bab Al-Hadid*, the screening of which was the highlight of the Chahine retrospective. Right, the auteur

## Chahine reaction

A major retrospective, and an unprecedented honour for a director from the Arab world. Locarno screened just about anything Youssef Chahine ever touched

Youssef Chahine is the most important film director in Egypt and the Arab world. That was certainly the gist of the magnificent retrospective of his films screened during this year's Locarno Film Festival, the first ever complete retrospective for an Egyptian or Arab film director screened anywhere, not only abroad, but in Egypt and the Arab world as well. The sheer scope of the retrospective was mind boggling, encompassing the entire Chahine filmography and more...

Locahne's massive recognition of the genius of Youssef Chahine is only the beginning, for the retrospective will move on, in stages, to Zurich, Geneva and Basle. After Switzerland, it will move on to the Cinematheque Francaise in Paris and then to the Arab Film Institute, also in Paris, before travelling to Bologna and Turin in Italy and finally, albeit in a shorter, more condensed form, embarking on a whistle-stop tour of 10 cities in the US, including San Francisco, Washington D.C., Chicago and New York.

Without a grant from the Swiss government, the whole enterprise — the gargantuan effort exerted in gathering the oeuvres, once scattered all over the place, washing them and colour-correcting the majority, reviving and reprinting hundreds of original black and white and colour lobby, stills and photographic, reconstructing tattered posters and the collection of hundreds upon hundreds of press books, articles, paper-clippings and snippets — would have been impossible.

The retrospective certainly generated a terrific interest in Chahine memorabilia and throughout the festival film critics and huffus alike inquired not just about videos and books about Chahine, but whether images, T-shirts and other paraphernalia were available in Cairo.

The Chahine retrospective in Locarno included:

*Baba Amin* (House Daddy) 1950 with Hussein Riad, Faten Hamama and Kamal El-Shenawi; *Im Al-Nil* ( Nile Boy) 1951, starring Faten Hamama, Yehya Chahine and Shoukri Sarhan; *Al-Mohareg Al-Kebir* (The Great Clown) 1952, with Youssef Wahbi, Faten Hamama and Farid Mohamed; *Sayedat Al-Qitarr* (Lady on a Train) 1952 with Laila Mourad, Yehya Chahine and Serag Mounir; *Nissa Bilal Regal* (Women Without Men) 1953 starring Mary Queenie, Hoda Sultan and Ernest Hamdy; *Sera Fil-Wadi* (Conflict in the Valley) 1953 — also

listed as *Blazing Sun* — with Faten Hamama, Omar Sharif and Farid Shakti; *Shaytan Al-Sakara* (Desert Devil) 1954 with Omar Sharif, Mariana Fakhr El-Din and Louis Sedki; *Sera Fil-Mina* (Conflict on the Dock) 1956 — also listed as *Dark Waters* — starring Faten Hamama, Omar Sharif and Ahmad Ramzi; *Enta Habibi* (You are My Love) 1957 with Farid El-Atrash, Shadia and Hind Rostom; *Wadad Hobak* (Farewell My Love) 1957 with Farid El-Atrash, Shadia and Ahmad Ramzi, and *Bab Al-Hadid* (Cairo Station) 1958 — also listed as Central Station — with Youssef Chahine himself, with Hind Rostom and Farid Shawki.

This film was easily the most noteworthy, and popular, of the entire retrospective. Chahine, who opposite the voluptuous Hind Rostom was the film's main protagonist, was on hand at the Piazza Grande in the beard of Locano to greet the cheering audience with his escort.

Hind Rostom, close to tears, could hardly believe her eyes and ears. Later, over massive doses of coffee, she confided that Chahine had been right all along. The film, 38 years earlier, had been jeered. Most critics considered it a pretentious flop with erratic cinematography, choppy editing and an ambiguous script. It was viciously attacked for being too explicit in its treatment of sexual frustration and compulsive violence.

The producer, Rostom reminisced, had called her one fatal Monday and told her not to bother to attend any screenings. Now, 38 years later, she had watched the film grow, via television and video airings, into a tremendous cult film considered by many, including the Academy of Motion Pictures in Hollywood, as one of the best hundred films of all time.

In Locano Hind Rostom was described as "Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, Marilyn Monroe and Brigitte Bardot combined into one". She saw herself on the largest film screen in the world, set up for over 6,000 spectators gathered in the grand piazza that boasted perfect viewing and state of the art sound reproduction. Such was the air of anticipation generated by the screening that Rostom, palpably unable to cope with the tension, sat for much of the film with her daughter Passant at a nearby cafe, chain smoking and guzzling Italian espresso, unable to watch.

Later she admitted that the from her cafe table the crowd had sounded so silent that she thought they had drifted away from the piazza. It was only after the film was over that the clapping came like an extended bolt of thunder.

Then, as we all strolled towards the hotel along the lake, the memories came from her like a round of live ammunition from an automatic machine gun.

"You think it was easy working with him? He would ask me to jump from one moving train to the other. In one sequence a small kid was supposed to be in danger of being run over by a moving locomotive. I was asked to run and save him which I did, intuitively. At the time I thought if Chahine wanted it that way, he probably knows what he is doing. Today, on that huge screen, I was scared silly watching that same sequence. He is mad, and has made us all mad. And that wet Neglige shot. It was originally cut in Egypt so I never really knew what had been captured on film. But today 6,500 Swiss viewers sat and watched... the God I feel so... strange. What a traitor."

She puffed at her millionth cigarette. "What a mad genius. I am so proud of the film. I am so proud of him. I am so proud for Egypt."

Later on at the hotel, and for at least five more days, and over gallons of espresso, the 90 minutes which are the entire duration of *Bab Al-Hadid* was discussed over and over again.

Other films shown in the Chahine retro were *Jamila Al-Djazaeriva* (Djamilah the Algerian) 1958 with Magda Ahmed Mazhar and Roushdy Abaza; *Hob Illa Al-Abad* (Love Forever) 1959 starring Nadia Lutfi, Kamal El-Shehaway and Mahmoud El-Meligi; *Bein Eideik* (Between Your Arms) 1960 with Magda, Shoukri Sarhan and Zeinat Sedki; *Nida' Al-Oshak* (Call of Lovers) 1961 starring Shoukri Sarhan, Berland Abd El-Hamid and Farid Shawki; *Raqd Fi Hayan* (A Man in My Life) 1961 with Samia Ahmed Shoukri Sarhan and Tewfik Al-Dekki; *Al-Nasser Salaheddin* (Saladin) 1963 with Ahmed Mazhar, Nadia Lutfi and Laila Fawzi; *Fagr Ya'm Gedid* (The Dawn of a New Day) 1964, starring Samia Gamal, Seif El-Din and Youssef Chahine; *Bayad Al-Khawatim* (Vendor of Rings) 1965 starring Fairuz, Nasri Shams El-Din and Youssef Azar; *Rimal Min Da-*

*hab* (Golden Sands) 1966 with Faten Hamama, Paul Burge and Doraid Laham; *Alnas Wal-Nil* (People and the Nile) 1968 with Soad Hosni, Salah Zafar and Mahmoud El-Meligi; *Al-Ard* (The Land) 1969 with Mahmoud El-Meligi, Ezzat El-Alayli and Nagwa Ibrahim; *Al-Ektiar* (The Choice) 1970 starring Soad Hosni, Ezzat El-Alayli and Hoda Sultani; *Al-Ayfur* (The Sparrow) 1973 starring Mahmoud El-Meligi, Seif El-Din and Mousha Tawfiq; *Awdat El Ibd Al-Dal* (Return of the Prodigal Son) 1976; with Magda El-Roumi, Hoda Sultan and Mahmoud El-Meligi;

*Iskenderiya... Leh* (Alexandria... Why?) 1976 with Nala Fathi, Ahmed Zaki and Mousha Mobeid; *Hadouda Masriya* (An Egyptian Story) 1982 with Youssra, Nour Al-Sherif and Solair El-Babli; *Al Wada'a Bonaparte* (Adieu Bonaparte) 1984 starring Michel Piccoli, Mousha Mobeid and Patrice Chereau; *Al-Tom Al-Sades* (The Sixth Day) 1986 with Dalida, Mousha Mobeid and Youssef Chahine; *Iskenderiya Kamam wa Kamam* (Alexandria Again And Forever) 1989 with Youssra, Youssef Chahine and Hussein Fahmi; *Al-Muhajer* (The Emigrant) 1994 with Youssra, Mahmoud Hemida, Khaled El-Nabaoui and Michel Piccoli.

Also available for the first time in complete form and newly revitalised were the Chahine shorts including the first ever screening of "untitled", a 1945 black and white film collage of shots of students, teachers and other things one might see at Victoria College Alex-

andria.

Other films included *Eid El-Mairun* (The Holy Oil) 1967 (documentary); *Salwa* 1970; *Intelak* (The Taifcope) 1973; *Al-Kahirra Menawara Bi Ahlaka* (Cairo as told by Youssef Chahine) 1991; and *Lumiere et Compagnie*, a 52 second shot filmed by Chahine with an original Lumière camera for the sketch film *Lumiere et Compagnie*.

All films were screened to capacity audiences. Every one inquired about his new film *Al-Masir* (The Destiny) starring Laila Eloui, Mahmoud Hemida, Nour El-Sherif and Mousha Mobeid.

Chahine himself attended half the festival, took everything in his stride, joked with everyone, worried like mad, gave many interviews, and bubbled exuberantly. He was reaping the harvest of decades of sowing. It probably felt grand.

## Plain Talk

There are some — exceedingly few, I hasten to add — who prefer to work in silence, shunning publicity of any sort. One needs to know them personally to get an inkling of their culture and professional achievements.

One such person is Ahmed Elman, professor of classics at Cairo University. On Elman's impressively long list of affiliations are: president of the Egyptian Society for Graeco-Roman Studies, president of the Egyptian Association of Comparative Studies and advisor to the minister of education for the affairs of the Alexandria Library.

Versed as he is in more than one culture, Elman has played the role of literary ambassador, on the one hand introducing the classics into Arabic and on the other translating Arabic literature into Greek. He has written such books as *Greek Literature as Human and International Heritage, Latin Literature and its Cultural Role* and translated, among other things, Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Seneca's *Hercules on Oita Mountains*. Meanwhile, he has rendered into Greek Naguib Mahfouz' *The Beginning and the End* and devoted a book to *The Classical Sources of Terwif El-Hakim's Theatre*. What distinguishes Elman's work from that of other classicists is the emphasis he places on reaching a wide audience. His approach is both academic and popular.

The study of the classics has always been popular in Egypt. The interest in modern times started with Egyptians sent to Europe on scholarships. Taha Hussein was one of the most influential exponents of classical studies. Ahmed Lutfi El-Sayed, the first rector of Cairo University, was the first to translate Aristotle's *Ethics*. So moved were the poets Hafez Ibrahim and Ahmed Shawqi by the translation that they waxed lyrical about it in verse. But then Taha Hussein criticised them for their lack of real knowledge of Aristotle: "Unfortunately for our modern literature, Shawqi has not lived with the ancient Greek culture as he has with the ancient Arabs. Had he done so, he would have presented Egypt with a masterpiece of poetry."

But let me return to Elman. He appears to hold some daring ideas. For one thing, he believes that Egyptian writers have only a cursory knowledge of the classics — hence what he sees as a lack of depth and of precision in their work which in his opinion can be gained only through a thorough knowledge of the classics. Elman believes classicists have a major role to play in the field of comparative studies, a role that deserves to be enhanced.

Yet while he feels the classics have achieved a certain status, albeit modest, in Egypt, they are losing ground in their land of origin. Western Europe, the first heir to the heritage of Greece and Rome, is increasingly relegating the classics to the shadows. This can be detected in the loss of interest in Greek and Latin and in the continuing shortage of classical scholars. Holding "the savage attack of science and technology" culpable for this state of affairs, he however believes the electronic age can ideally aid the classics, especially in tabulating and indexing texts.

**Mursi Saad El-Din**

## Is it rude to point?

How do you go about convincing a star like Anthony Quinn to play a 104-year old man who totters about his ancient but beautiful castle with other people's fingers up his nose and in his ears. You might well ask?

*Seven Servants* was certainly one of the most interesting films shown during the Locarno Film Festival. Produced by Das Werk, a company that originally specialised in digital effects and post production, the film's origin was a sudden brain wave of Daryush Shokof's, who first broached the idea of a living octopus that might serve as a metaphor for life and death.

The ambiguity of *Seven Servants'* plot meant that a top cast was needed before the production could get off the ground. When Anthony Quinn joined the project, shooting was scheduled and prepared within weeks. Production started without any distribution deal, pre-sale or subsidies.

*Seven Servants* is the story of Archie (Quinn), a rich old man who lives alone with his maid Anya, he is philosophical, funny and yet somehow incomplete. He also feels death approaching, and finds himself wanting to prepare for his impending demise by anticipating the feeling of death. He longs for affection, the sensation of becoming one with all the creatures on the planet and finds peace only when his body is energised by love and positive energy from others.

He sees this incomplete state as an illness and is determined to cure himself. Consequently Archie hires seven servants from four different parts of the world to fill all his facial orifices. The idea is to block off his external senses one by one — hearing, smell, sight, and finally taste — while at the same time becoming the nucleus of a single living organism with 10 arms and 10 legs that moves together, eats together and laughs together, thus ending the segregation that Archie feels has become the most dangerous phenomenon in the world.

Each servant places an index finger in Archie's ears or nostrils, yet it takes Blade (Archie's long-time friend) and Hilda (his only true love) to complete the process

## Uppers and downers

Youssef Chahine was not the only film maker with ties to the Arab World to be screened in the Locarno Festival, which included several noteworthy films, many of which were either about or made by Arabs.

Probably the most prominent film in this category is *Miel et Cendres* (Honey and Ashes) 1996, directed by Nadia Fares. The "passport" of the film is quite confusing. The director is half Egyptian, half Swiss. The film is a Swiss-Tunisian co-production while the main actress, the lovely Noura Khoudra, is French, but actually hails from the Magreb. But it is maybe this multi-racial setup that makes this film so strong and beautiful, its delivery so effective.

The film is about the chance encounter of three North African women. Leila, a young girl full of desire for liberation, is in love with Hassan, a character tied up in the traditions of his culture. He would like exercise and enjoy his life and freedom with Leila, but only as long as this is kept undercover. In other words, he wants to indulge in the schizophrenia relationships that are a symptom of closed societies.

When Leila is battered by her father and decides to run to Hassan for refuge, the mother of her would-be lover throws her out into the dark night, shooting her helpless son back into the room.

The film talks also of Naima and her young daughter Mounia. They are living alone. The marriage had never worked out. Naima, a doctor by profession, confides in her daughter about her long lost and only true love, way back during her years of study in Russia. Now, though, her life is stamped by the daily realities she must face. The lesson is not lost on the young daughter. She is condemned to carry on in the footsteps of her mother, up the long and winding road of traditional frustration. But Naima is also the saviour of Leila, once when she picks her up on the beach after three youths had attempted to rape her, and again when

The best and the worst, and what's in between. A rundown of the mixed bag that is any international film festival

she tries to calm her father against him beating her for being out late.

Then there is Amina, who maintains a sometimes violent relationship with her husband which ends in her being hospitalised only to be treated by Naima.

Leila is trying to continue her studies which she finances by moonlighting as Teresa, a "hostess" of the night, getting over her love for Hassan by falling in love with Idris, who is unaware of her non-academic occupation. He also decides to abuse her.

Confused?

Leila, however, is set upon sticking a knife up his abdomen.

Prison. Naima is shattered. Leila is shattered.

Hassan tries to make a comeback into Leila's life only to be shattered. In fact, it is a pretty shattering film.

*Honey and Ashes* was awarded the Ecumenique Jury Prize of the 49th Locarno Film Festival.

Among other highlights of the festival we should include:

*Nerette et Boni* (France) directed by Claire Denis; *Marian* (Czech Republic/France) directed by Peter Pavláč; *Nun Ya Goldim* (Iran) directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf; *Floating Life* (Australia) directed by Clark Law; *Secrets and Lies* (UK) directed by Mike Leigh; *Microcosmos* (France/Switzerland) directed by Marie Perennou and Claude Nuridsany; *Les Voleurs* (Thieves) (France) directed by Andre Techine; *Afarit El-Ashraf* (Ashraf Demons) (Egypt) directed by Ossama Fawzi; *Spikeli Slasz* (The Conspirators of Pleasure) (Czech Republic) directed by Jan Svankmajer; *Shooting On The Nile* (Italy) directed by Barbara Mellega who takes stock of current Egyptian cinema in interviews with film professionals, actors, producers, directors, etc. The interviews are braided with footages shot on the set of one particular film *Eish Al-Ghorab* (Mushroom) directed by Samir Seif and starring Youssra and Nour El-Sherif.

Other films, that probably need a second viewing, include:

*I Stole You Kokora* (Slaughter of the Rock) (Greece/Cyprus) directed by Andreas Panayiotis; *Color of a Brist and Leaping Day* (US) directed by Christopher Munch; *Red Hollywood* (US) directed by Thom Andersen and Noel Burch.

And then there were several absolutely useless films which included:

*Cheois-Toi Un Ami* (Choose Yourself a Friend) (France/Guinea) directed by Mama Keita; *The Arena of Murder* (Israel) directed by Amos Gitai — an attempt at cashing in on, of all things, the assassination of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. The film is riddled with long and boring interviews that say nothing. It is also littered with clips of an Israeli heavy metal band who mouth anti-Likud slogans and supposedly sing for peace. The film regrettably never fails, not for a moment from sounding and looking like a propaganda vehicle, the type the Arabs had long been accused of churning out; *Last Book Found* (US) directed by Jim Cohen; *Impressions D'Afrique... Du Sud* (France) directed by Karine Dhifi; *Nineta, Le Messager* (France) directed by Jean-Andre Fieschi, a video interview with Nine Davoli, Pier Paolo Pasolini's actor and friend, who appeared in seven of the late director's films. Davoli remembers his friend not with nostalgia but with relish. In fact it is a pretentious interview that fails miserably and ends up looking like the milking of Pasolini in yet another of those "wish he was here" interviews.

# 'The plants know me'

In the ancient land of the Jabaliya, Ragi Halim meets Sinai's mountain-top medicine man, and discovers Dr Ahmed's secrets

"Indigenous knowledge" is a term I used to read in books, but had no practical experience with until my trip to St Catherine last month. The area surrounding St Catherine is the land of the Jabaliya tribe, many of whom are professional camel safari guides. Their Jabal Mousa trip, through *Tariq Al-Solais* (the way of the stars), usually starts at 2am and lasts till dawn. A camel carries you up three-quarters the height of the mountain. Then you have to climb 750 stairs — constructed by monks and the Jabaliya long ago — on foot until you reach the top.

During my tour around the area's bazaar, I met both outsiders who had settled and opened businesses and local citizens who mainly belong to the Jabaliya tribe. The newcomers often complained of the absence of a local hospital, a physician or even a pharmacy. "You have to go to El-Tor Hospital if you have the flu," one of them complained.

But the Jabaliya have entrusted their health to a Bedouin known as Dr Ahmed — the "village doctor" and an expert on wild and medicinal plants in the area. He is not a quack and he doesn't use amulets or incense.

I heard about Dr Ahmed for the first time while eating dinner in the hall of Daniella Hotel in Wadi Al-Rabs with Professor Ghassabur, former head of the department of natural resources at Cairo Uni-

versity, and the hotel manager, Medhat Abdallah, among others. Ghassabur noted, "A lot of people complain about the absence of medical services in St Catherine."

Abdallah pointed out that local residents believe in Dr Ahmed's traditional herbal medicine. "He has been very successful in treating headaches, coughs, urine retention and high blood pressure with herbs," explained Abdallah. "The Jabaliya recount mythical stories about Dr Ahmed's grandfather. Supposedly a lighted bead came down from the sky, circled around his head and rested in his turban. This bead became a test for honesty; it was dropped in a glass of water and whoever drank the glass without interruption, was considered honest."

The next day I went to meet Dr Ahmed at his place beyond the police station on the right of the road leading to the monastery between Al-Der and Al-Sifafa. Contrary to my expectations of meeting a magician or some sort of sorcerer, and after a two-hour-long talk, I discovered an expert in biodiversity and a professional collector and cultivator of wild plants: Sheikh Ahmed Mansour Awad, a self-educated Bedouin.

"I learned the basis of traditional herb medicine from my grandfather Sheikh Mansour over a period of 25 years. I learnt how to find the rarest plants in the bellies of valleys or on mountain tops. I learnt the medical use of each, their seasons of growth and I know how many of them are extinct or about to vanish," said Dr Ahmed.

Those who are responsible for preserving nature in our country should pay some attention to 45-year-old Dr Ahmed who, as camel safari guide Mohamed Farag recounts, would climb to the mountain tops and play his flute for the plants.

"The plants of these mountains know me. Why don't we teach such knowledge to our children at school? I'm not a herb seller. I believe in nature. What we don't comprehend today could be the cure for all kinds of diseases," Dr Ahmed continued.

Dr Ahmed is a walking library, full of biological and geomorphological information about the area. "It is painful to die without passing on my knowledge to my son who refuse to accept it. I can't find anyone who deserves such knowledge, anyone who won't abuse it," Dr Ahmed says.

"Why the talk about death? You're still young," I asked him.

"I'm 45 years old, I don't smoke, I don't drink tea or coffee. I don't eat fatty meat. I'm married to one wife only. I hate no one, but I'm tired of continuously climbing the high mountains to collect plants and prepare medicine from them while inhaling their toxic vapours," he answered.

"How long would it take me to learn about traditional medicine?" I ventured.

"Six years," he answered, "but you won't be able to practice more than 25 years because of the exhaustion I spoke about before. This medicine is a killer to its owner but a saviour for others. The idea of teaching someone else depends on the pupil. I would pass on my knowledge to someone who has only a basic level of education or to an expert in pharmacology. What is important is that the student has a pure soul and respect for nature... I won't give

away my secrets to someone who does not deserve them."

Dr Ahmed classifies diseases as aerial (air-borne) or blood diseases: "Aerial diseases are caused by microbes carried by the air or polluted food. Headaches and psychic disturbances are aerial. Blood diseases are internal not external like aerial ones, and they include hypertension, arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) etc..."

Wearing a white *galabiya* and standing beside his stock of processed wild plants packed in small plastic packets, Dr Ahmed explained that he determines the required dosage after inquiring about the complaint of the patient. Some medicines are in liquid oil form such as *colycinthus oil* (*al-handal*) which treats rheumatic pains. Prices range from LE1-LE5.

Joseph Hobbs wrote in his 1996 book *MOUNT SINAI* that "Four-hundred-nineteen species occur in just 2 per cent of the peninsula's territory, the high Siwa massif around Jabal Mousa. This high mountain ecosystem is a refuge for 31 endemic plant species, which are found nowhere else in the world. With its biotic wealth this region is an 'ecological island' in a desert."

Beside lessons in avian activity, the eucalyptus tree provided us with leaves which my mother boiled and then placed on a small burner on the days when the *khomas* blew. Their minty vapours relieved the choking feeling produced by the dust which permeated the house at such times.

The St Catherine area was declared a nature reserve by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) in 1988. Environmentalists have suggested that Egypt try to get the area on the World Heritage list in order to attract international funding and guarantee sustainable development. Egypt is a signatory to the World Heritage Convention which allows for the conservation of both cultural and natural heritage societies. "The St Catherine area is an excellent example of a site which combines both characteristics," Dr Ghassabur noted.

The World Heritage Convention was ratified by 145 states in February 1996 and the World Heritage list now comprises 469 properties (350 cultural, 102 natural and 17 mixed). Egypt has five world cultural heritage sites including the Pyramids, Luxor, Old Cairo and St Menas in Mariut, but no natural heritage sites.



ing to the monastery between Al-Der and Al-Sifafa. Contrary to my expectations of meeting a magician or some sort of sorcerer, and after a two-hour-long talk, I discovered an expert in biodiversity and a professional collector and cultivator of wild plants: Sheikh Ahmed Mansour Awad, a self-educated Bedouin.

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When I was a child, we had an enormous eucalyptus tree, which housed families of kites. With my brother's binoculars, crouched on the top floor terrace, we used to watch their nests. Sadly, although I had the chance to observe a baby kite taught the skill of flying by his mother, who kept pushing him out of the nest. I never had enough patience to wait until I could see one of the young actually breaking its shell. It is probably at this time that my decision was made not to take up bird-watching as a hobby. As for my brother, he was soon training the binoculars on more interesting subjects.

Beside lessons in avian activity, the eucalyptus tree provided us with leaves which my mother boiled and then placed on a small burner on the days when the *khomas* blew. Their minty vapours relieved the choking feeling produced by the dust which permeated the house at such times.

Tucked away in a corner, there was a small patch in which violets were planted during their brief season. My greatest pleasure was to push away the delicate leaves and uncover the tiny flowers. I never picked any violets, in the mistaken belief that, if I did not, they would last longer. When their time was over, the gardeners would gather all the little flowers in a small bouquet that would not last more than an hour or two. Suddenly, bunches together in a glass, they would look just pitiful. At this time I would avoid going near the patch where they had lived so mysteriously. Only when their season was over again did I go back every day in the hope that I would be surprised with the sight of the very first one.

There were always other flowers in the garden, however. There was a huge climber which completely covered one side of the house with crimson bell-shaped flowers. In later years, my mother had this plant removed, because, she said, all sorts of little garden creatures used it as a thoroughfare to and from our living room. My mother's profound distaste for little animals always surprised me. I personally had made friends with a tiny mouse which came to visit one night when I was sick in bed. I gave it dry biscuits and it came back several nights in a row. I never told anyone about this clandestine visitor, as I was sure that my grandmother would set out the horrible mousetrap she used sometimes with a piece of cheese attached to a hook. I always waited to see if there was any talk of a mouse having been in our pantry. Then I would know that the mousetrap would be placed in the kitchen at bed-time. On those particular nights I would wait until everyone was asleep, crawl out of bed and remove the cheese carefully. The next day, I would not even smile, listening to my grandmother reciting the story of a mouse so clever that it had managed to reach the cheese without releasing the catch.

Other interesting creatures frequented the garden, too. The praying mantis, for instance, favoured a vine which grew behind the house. It had the most amazing leaves, silvery on the back and deep green on the inside. The leaves remained closed at first; the two halves neatly stuck together until they reached maturity. They would then part slowly into a perfect oval with a sharp point at one end. Our servants considered that this plant had special spiritual qualities, and when I was taught how to pray, they advised me to place a young leaf plucked from that particular climber and gently pried open, at the head of my praying mat. It was, they said, the purest thing to place my forehead upon. I have never seen anyone else doing a leaf from this plant in that way, but on the other hand I have never seen this particular plant anywhere but in our garden. Maybe it was just one of the many superstitions I thrived on as a child. Our garage opened directly on the garden on one side, but we were never encouraged to play there. I found it a musty dark place where I never ventured with pleasure except to retrieve my brother, who was always to be found there, in complicated conversation with the driver. His greatest reward was when the hood of the car was lifted and he was allowed to peek inside. I could never understand him favouring a machine when he could have been hunting for four-leaf clovers under the magnolia tree.

The entrance to the garage was hardly ever used for the car, because it was half-covered with the bougainvillea which extended to the pergola on the other side. This part of the garden was a mess of colours, several bougainvilleas having grown entwined to the pergola. Their branches were so heavy that there was always talk of pruning them, but somehow I don't remember it ever happening and the shrubs were left to grow as they pleased, carpeting the ground periodically with their paper-like flowers in white, pink, orange and red. We picked them from the ground by the handful and delighted in emptying the bowls on each other's heads.

Fayza Hassan

## Culture in the country

Cultural activities are inspiring rural teens to join the fun at youth centres, reports Rania Khalaf

Egypt's younger generations are not an easy lot to entertain. Though national youth centres have been an outlet for the athletically-inclined, those who seek some deeper inspiration are left hanging.

But for the past few years, cultural and scientific activities are now being added to most centres' agendas and a new generation of youth are reaping the benefits of innovative programmes.

"I am really happy that I have the chance to come here every day to read and learn how to use the computer," said Dina Ali, a 13-year-old girl who uses the facilities at Marikat Mit Roumi Youth Centre.

A special room in the centre, located in a village just outside Mansoura, in the Nile Delta, is dedicated to computer sciences. In 13 other governorates throughout Egypt, children in poor villages who once had no access to computers now have the chance to explore the developments of digital technology.

Iman Samir, 10, said, "I find it very easy to learn computer skills. I feel that I have become more intelligent."

The fundamental philosophy behind youth centres has changed dramatically in the past few years. The centres were traditionally restricted to sports activities, notes Samia Khalaf, deputy director of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS), while cultural activities were severely lacking.

This year, according to Rawhiya Abul-Ezz, general director of youth centres at SCYS, vocational training will be introduced as part of a plan to broaden the scope of activities offered at Egypt's 4,000 youth centres.

Public voluntary projects such as garbage collecting and planting trees are also beginning to feature amongst youth centre activities.

These new developments have attracted a larger pool of participants. Part of SCYS's philosophy, according to Khalaf, is to attract children at younger ages so that they continue to participate when they are older and more prone to get involved in delinquent activities. The introduction of specialised sports halls and open stadiums is intended to satisfy the recreational needs of older kids.

SCYS field trips have been very popular. Adel Abd-Latif, a 14-year-old from Dikizim, in Mansoura Governorate, remembers his first trip with SCYS: "It was the very first time I travelled outside my small village. It was very useful for me to make friends with students from various governorates and to know more about my country. Other students from nearby villages have gone to Morocco, Finland, France and Russia. I hope I'm next," he said.

In most villages, youth centres are popular venues for recreation. Many children say they prefer going to the centres because village schools generally lack the appropriate space and equipment for extra-curricular fun.

"At the centre, I find all sorts of activities. Cultural programmes in schools are shallow. We do not even have an organised room for music," said 13-year-old Dina Ahmed. For many students like Dina, these centres compensate for the differences in rural and urban school curriculums. Urban schools are generally more comprehensive, whereas rural students do not enjoy expanded social and cultural programmes.

In the past, the lack of cultural activities discouraged girls from getting involved in centres' activities. But Samia Abul-Hamid, a Mansoura-based SCYS staff member, indicated that with the new plans, that trend is changing. In Mansoura, young girls from surrounding villages enjoy singing and gymnastics. These activities, in turn, have prompted families living in the remotest and most traditional areas to change their attitudes and encourage their daughters to participate.

Effat Abd-Latif is one of 12 girls who take karate lessons at Mit Roumi Youth Centre. "My family encouraged me to learn karate. I love it. I've learned how to defend myself and it has encouraged me not to feel shy when I deal with boys. I am now more self-confident," she said.

Thamarat Mohamed, a librarian at the centre, noted that children get bored easily and books are not enough. Nabil Mohamed, director of the Mit Roumi Youth Centre, said his centre needs new sports equipment as well as books. Ahmed agreed that funds allocated to youth centres are less than adequate.

Although the number of girls participating is still much lower than the number of boys, karate coach Farag El-Sayed confirmed that co-ed classes have helped boys and girls learn how to relate to each other better.

Al-Riyad Youth Centre in Al-Riyad village has established a small Islamic kindergarten where children memorise verses from the Qur'an. Anum Ahmed, an official at Al-Riyad, said the programme is intended to counter the influence of extremist Islamist groups, who may distort the teachings of Islam. The programme has been a success and according to his estimates, more than 2,000 young people participate in the centre's various programmes.

But youth centre staff members complain that services are still limited due to funding constraints. "We lack the funds needed to establish and develop our libraries," said Abul-Ezz. In many youth centres, she pointed out, there is lack of organised libraries; there may be a stock of books, but no shelves and no staff.

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### Sufra Dayma

#### Fried vegetables with dressing

**Ingredients:**  
1/2 kg round black aubergine  
1/2 kg green pepper  
1/2 kg zucchini  
1 tsp. crushed garlic  
1/2 cup white vinegar  
3 tbsp. white flour  
Salt + hot chili (optional)

**Method:**  
Peel the aubergine and cut into round rings half a centimetre thick. Put the aubergine rings in a strainer and sprinkle some coarse salt over them and leave to shed their residue. Scrub the zucchini and slice lengthwise into thin slices, then coat the slices with the flour after slightly salting it, and leave aside. Cut the green peppers in halves and remove the seeds, wash them and set aside. Prepare a frying pan and heat a generous amount of oil to deep fry all the vegetables, starting with the aubergine. Shake off the salt from the rings and deep fry until golden. Strain from oil and place on kitchen blotting paper. Next, fry the green pepper halves until tender and follow by frying the flour-coated zucchini slices. Remove from pan and place all vegetables on kitchen blotting paper. In a glass container, mix the garlic with the vinegar and the hot chili (optional) and add some salt to decrease the acidity. In a glass serving bowl, alternate the fried vegetables in layers, starting by the aubergine, the green pepper and then the zucchini, until you are through with the whole quantity. On top of each layer sprinkle the vinegar and garlic dressing with a spoon. Serve as a side dish with any meal.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

### Restaurant review

#### Cool and uncluttered

Plain walls, and good, inexpensive food.  
Nigel Ryan on an unlikely Indian

Tandoori is located rather discreetly on Shehab St in Mohandessin, behind a plain facade punctuated by four pointed archways. The dining room is marble floored and white walled, with none of the paraphernalia usually associated with Indian restaurants. No waiters with saucers pretending to be moguls, no flock wallpaper, nor none of the decorative excesses that generally pass for subcontinental ambience.

It is cool. The most prominent focal points are provided by an array of remarkably healthy looking plants that obscure the view of the street and a few brightly coloured kilims doting the floor. Surprisingly for an Indian restaurant Tandoori boasts a very non-Indian salad bar and there are, in addition, a number of non-Indian items on the menu. I can vouch, though, for neither the salad nor the Western dishes on the menu. There seems little point, so far as I can see, in going to a restaurant called Tandoori and eating *palak paneer*, *raita*, *dal*, *sang* *ghost*, *chicken makhni*, *lamb biryani*, *naan* and *mashla kulchar*. A lot of food, certainly enough for the three relatively hungry people sitting at the table.

One thing to note about Tandoori is that it is a perfectly reasonable place for vegetarians. *Palak paneer*, a mildly spiced and very successful spinach dish with soft white cheese, contained quantities of fresh coriander alongside ginger and, possibly, a little cinnamon. It might easily serve as an entree, though it was listed on the menu among the vegetable side dishes.

Tandoori, 11, Shehab St, Mohandessin. Tel: 34 86 301

### Al-Ahram Weekly Crossword

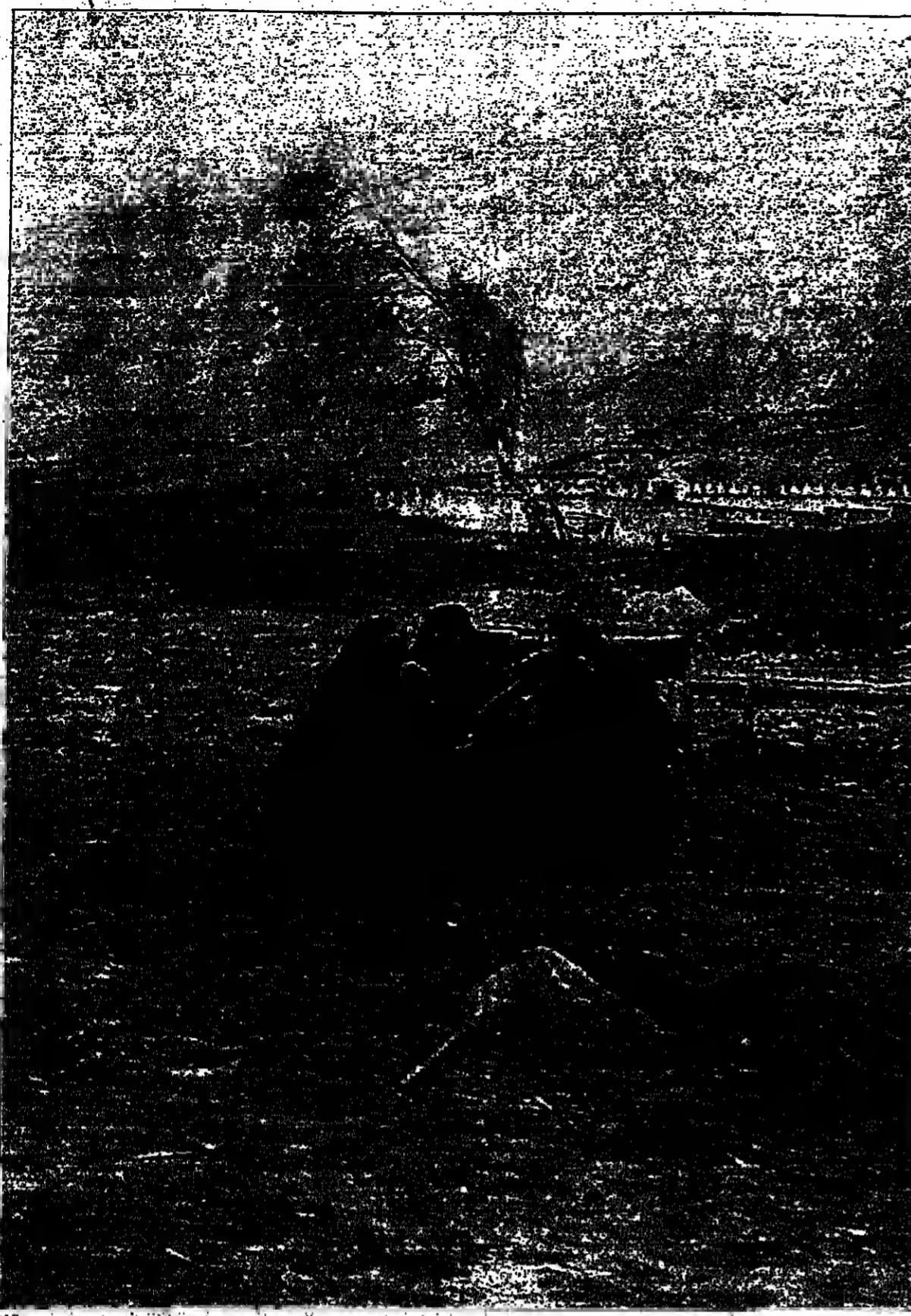
By Samia Abdennour

#### Across

1. Surrendered (5)
2. Ogres (4)
3. Compress (4)
4. Seeds of grapes and berries (5)
5. Origin; implant (4)
6. Genus of bitter herbs (4)
7. Place for rearing delicate plants or hatching their growth (10)
8. A sub-tropic fruit (6)
9. African leopard (6)
10. Rubbish; multiple birth (6)
11. Engage in amorous fondling (4)
12. A hand propeller of boat (3)
13. Connect (4)
14. First step (10)
15. No more better than (4)
16. Above (4)
17. Actres (5)
18. Chopper (4)
19. Miss Shearer (4)
20. Weather abbreviations (5)
21. Confines (5)
22. Lied down (4)
23. Perfumes (6)
24. Stamina (6)
25. Layer (4)
26. Goals (4)
27. Scatter to the four winds (7)
28. Traverse; move past (4)
29. Mine entrance (4)
30. Salad days; growing time (5)
31. Apprehend once more (9)
32. Spanish cheer (3)
33. Goddess of dawn (3)
34. Great weight (3)

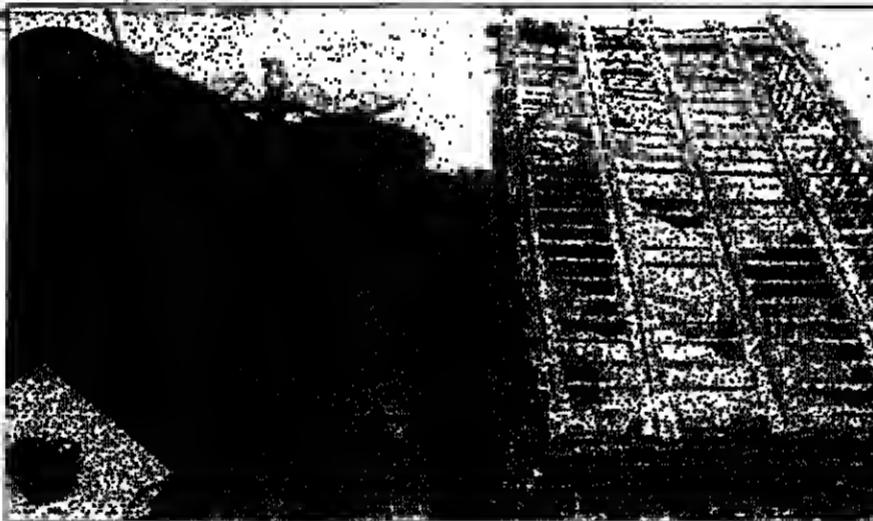
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2. Lied down (4)
3. Perfumes (6)
4. Stamina (6)
5. Layer (4)
6. Goals (4)
7. Scatter to the four winds (7)
8. Traverse; move past (4)
9. Mine entrance (4)
10. Salad days; growing

Dina Ezzat examines the dynamics of power and powerlessness in this instalment of the Weekly's series on Upper Egypt



# Mothers of men

Women in Upper Egypt are not without power and influence. To win them, however, they must first beget sons



Man the provider? Reality often belies ideology

"When they told me it was a boy, I was filled with joy and they brought me boiled eggs floating in water. But when news of a girl came, I was given a raw egg, not even covered in water."

This is one of the most common sayings in Upper Egypt. The words dramatically express the status of womanhood in the Egyptian south.

A woman must always have the presence, or at least the shadow, of a man to carry her throughout her life. "This is Upper Egypt. A man is the pillar and the foundation of everything," said Fatma Abdel-Samie, a social activist based in Minya. "Even when we reach out with help for women, we have to go through the men of the village or of the family," she added.

"Yes, this is what our lives are about," agreed Nagla Bedair, mother of three boys, summing up a litany of discrimination which the women of Upper Egypt have struggled to cope with for time immemorial.

"I had problems getting pregnant. I was terrified that I would not be able to give my husband a child. But God responded to my dedicated prayers," she said.

When Nagla knew she was pregnant she was very happy, but she had one more wish to ask God to fulfil. She wanted her baby to be a boy.

"It's different when you have a boy. From the moment he is born and throughout a woman's life, it is different," she explained. Indeed, she said, her son's birth changed her life.

"My husband, who had gone to work in Iraq, out of desperation that I would ever have a child, returned home before his scheduled holiday. He told me he could not want to hold my son in his arms. He bought me gold and kept telling me 'well done,'" she remembered with a smile.

"What's more, Nagla's husband decided not to return to his well-paid job in Iraq but to stay at her side. And he built her an apartment covering the whole floor of a building. "Before then, we had lived in a room in his parents' house and he never wanted to get a place of our own. It was a problem because a woman's mother-in-law is always difficult to get along with," she added.

Nagla's is not the only case showing the miracles a son can bring. Fatma is an even better example.

Married at the age of 19, Fatma gave birth to three girls in a row. By the time she reached 24, her husband was tired of her "failure to get the son" and decided to use his right of polygyny to marry another woman. "But God did not want me to suffer the injustice. And it was my appointment with fate to get pregnant and give birth to a son shortly after my husband got married," she said. As an expression of his rejoicing at the male newborn, Fatma's husband decided to divorce his second wife. "He got me a new necklace with a big *wadjet* amulet," said Fatma.

In his book *Memories of a Village*, the late political and social theorist Basim Seif El-Dawla writes about the married woman in Upper Egypt: "It is the

wife, the housewife, who monopolises all the spiritual, emotional, and material answers to the questions of the man, the husband. She is, after all, the economic cornerstone of the house that she runs. For this house she serves in two capacities: finance and administration, while it is her husband who works".

Seif El-Dawla adds, "So the wife knows, and so does the husband, that if she gets angry, all his questions will remain unanswered."

But to achieve such status, the woman should first be the mother of a son.

"We believe that anything from God Almighty is a blessing, but to be honest, deep in our hearts what we want is a boy. At least one boy," summed up Mohamed Abdel-Samie, a government office clerk in Minya and the father of two boys and a girl.

A range of "practical" reasons reinforces such attitudes. Among them is inheritance law, based on the prevalent interpretations of Islamic sharia. If a man's offspring are all girls, his siblings and their offspring stand to inherit part of his wealth. They get nothing if he has even one son. Islamic law also provides that the woman should inherit twice as much as the daughter.

"One of her sons has just graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, another abandoned his studies at the Faculty of Engineering to join an Islamic militant group and the third dropped out of school and became a drug addict. "When people refer to her, they do not say she is the woman who helped five children stand on their own two feet," said one social worker. "They say she is the mother of the terrorist and the drug addict."

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Women, moreover, are looked at as a potential source of shame. A sexual infraction by one of its women-folk, whether married or unmarried, is possibly the most shameful thing that can happen to an Upper Egyptian family. "A woman who is found out to have lost her virginity out of wedlock is destined to be killed at the hands of a male relative, a father or a brother," said Ragaa Mohamed, a social worker. "Unlike Cairo, we do not have the concept of having the man remedying the situation by marrying the girl," she added.

According to Mohamed, who has experience in working with unmarried mothers, "it does not make a difference if the girl willingly gave herself to a man or if she was raped, because in the final analysis she is considered to have lost her honour."

The director of documentary films on subjects such as female-headed households and the aspirations of unprivileged women, El-Alboudi stresses that every day of their lives, southern women have to compromise their rights to education, nutrition, job opportunities and reproductive autonomy.

"It costs at least LE100 a year to send one child to school. You must pay LE30-40 in tuition fees, buy clothes and school supplies for the children, and pay for their private lessons," says social worker Shadiya Rushdi. "In a family where you have five kids, you need LE500 for schooling alone. But people need to eat, they need to go to doctors. So of course they would say let the girls stay at home because after all they will get married and be housewives."

Sabah's older brother was drafted into the army. "So it is only me and my father who bring in money. I do not save anything for myself. It is my duty to help with the education of my younger brothers and sisters," she said.

Nabila has similar responsibilities, but hardly any assets. A widow with three sons and four daughters, illiterate, untrained and completely penniless, she struggles to keep her head above water. She borrowed some money to start a small sandwich stall on the streets of Minya. This kept her going for a few years till she got in touch with a non-governmental organisation that helped her get a sizable loan to enlarge her small operation. She helped her daughters receive some education and married them off.

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# Into the heart of Chephren

Travellers to the Giza Plateau will be allowed into the Pyramid of Chephren after a 10-month hiatus for restorations. Omayma Abdel-Latif looks into its rebirth



Visitors (left) entering the Pyramid of Chephren after the 10-month restoration project. Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni (right) inspecting the latest development on the plateau

As the first phase of an ambitious LE12 million project to revamp the Giza Plateau nears completion, Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni inaugurated the reopening of the Pyramid of Chephren marks the commencement of public access to newly-discovered sites in the Giza Plateau.

The Giza Plateau is renowned for the wealth of archaeological treasures in its environs and scarcely a week passes without the discovery of new artefacts. The latest occurred a fortnight ago with the unearthing of a joined pair of statues of Ramses II. The minister of culture revealed that one of a kind pair, found to the south of the Pyramid of Mycerinus, will remain in situ.

Tourists will also, for the first time, be permitted to view the three Queens' Pyramids of the daughters of the Pharaoh Cheops.

"The opening of these new tourist sites will be crowned by the completion of the eight-year-old restoration project of the Sphinx and the inauguration of the new civilization museum," Hosni told Al-Ahram Weekly.

Restoration work began on Chephren Pyramid 10 months ago as part of the overall plan to restore the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The fragile state of the 4,500-year-old pyramid was revealed when a portion of the burial chamber ceiling collapsed last October. The damage prompted antiquities officials to carry out a major facelift of the interior walls applying new restoration techniques for the first time.

"The condition inside the pyramid had sharply deteriorated before the closure," said Mustafa Abdel-Qader, head of the restoration project. "The level of humidity often reached 95 degrees and the temperature sometimes surpassed 40 and 50 degrees Celsius, affecting the wall paintings. It was increasingly apparent the restoration could no longer be neglected."

Unlike the Pyramid of Cheops which has a built-in ventilation system, Chephren, with large numbers of tourists crowding inside the burial chamber, was particularly vulnerable to damage.

"It is like Nefertari's tomb where there is no

ventilation system, three thermohygrograph sets had to be installed," Shawki Nakha, head of restoration department at the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) told the Weekly.

He added that the first reading of both humidity and temperature levels conducted last Thursday show that conditions have stabilised. The temperature has not exceeded 20 degrees Celsius and the humidity level has been kept to 60 degrees. The ventilation system constantly rotates, renewing the air supply. In addition to the installation of the new ventilation system, a natural silicate was applied to the surfaces of the burial chamber.

"For six years this material has been applied on the limestone of the Western Cemetery and when it proved to be effective in preserving the stone, we decided to apply it on the walls of the burial chamber of the pyramid," Abdel-Kader said.

The Pyramid of Chephren was first opened to the public 30 years ago in January 1966. The recent restoration project, carried out at a cost of \$300,000, marks the second closure of the pyramid.

amid. It was restored once before using techniques that have since proven ineffective.

Visitors to Chephren will enjoy a new lighting system and newly-made stairs leading to the burial chamber. In a move to reduce the number of visitors, according to new directives, the SCA will begin charging LE10 admission to the pyramid.

"In recent years, some 5,000 tourists have visited in a single day and now we will apply the same visiting conditions as the Tomb of Nefertari," Abdel-Halim Nureddin, head of the SCA told the Weekly. "The numbers visitors will be restricted to 15 and the time of the visit will not exceed 15 minutes".

He also said that new directives have been issued to camel drivers and horsemen on the plateau requiring them to obtain licences from the Ministry of Culture. Those failing to acquire licences will be deprived from working inside the plateau and their camel or horse will be subject to confiscation.

As part of the next phase of the restoration project the Pyramid of Menkaure is next in line for closure and restoration.

## Persephone in Egypt

Three wall paintings depicting Persephone, the popular goddess of Greek mythology, have been re-discovered in two tombs located in Kom El-Shoqafa casting more light on the religious beliefs that survived in Alexandria through to the fourth century AD.

"The tombs were discovered in 1900 by the then German Archaeological Institute in

Alexandria," said Mervat Seifeddin, curator of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, who went on to explain that the paintings were so faint as to be virtually non-existent. Then, three years ago, when Seifeddin worked in collaboration with the French Archaeological Institute it was decided that they would be studied more closely.

It was only after ultra-violet projection was used that the tombs yielded their content. "We could see that the representations recounted the myth of the goddess Persephone, daughter of Zeus and Demeter, goddess of the harvest. Persephone was kidnapped by her uncle Hades, god of the underworld. Weary of searching for her daughter in vain, Demeter decided to turn the earth brown until Hades finally accepted the gods' proposal that Persephone should spend at least part of the year on earth with Demeter."

In one tomb, the first painting to the left depicts Per-

sephone accompanied by a group of nymphs as they pick flowers in a spacious garden. Toward the centre of the wall is the focal scene showing Persephone screaming as Hades seizes her in a chariot drawn by four horses. Athena, goddess of war, is a witness. She wears a helmet and attacks Hades with a spear, while Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, stands in silent observation.

The ceiling of the tomb is decorated with birds and plants which represent the gods who witnessed the kidnapping," said Seifeddin.

The upper part of the wall is decorated with pharaonic

themes including the mummification of Osiris. "This is a unique example of the combining of Pharaonic and Graeco-Roman art in a single tomb," said Seifeddin, who pointed out that after the Greek conquest of Egypt, the Egyptian and Greek nations were welded together in a common culture through the fusing of Egyptian and Greek mythology. "Hades and Osiris were both gods of the underworld," said Seifeddin. "Demeter and Isis, the wife of Osiris, were mother figures and goddesses of prosperity and goodness, both in search of beloved lost ones: Isis for her son Horus, Demeter for her daughter Persephone."

Seifeddin pointed out that the Pharaonic scene bears a fake hieroglyphic inscription. "Had it been genuine it would have been possible to date the tombs more easily," she said, adding that they probably go back to the third century AD and "must have belonged to two ladies who worshipped Demeter." She added that worship of this goddess flourished in Alexandria between the third and fourth centuries. "Demeter was believed to resurrect the dead and spare them eternal torture," she said.

The Catacombs of Kom El-Shoqafa is a collective underground cemetery dating back to the first century AD. A visitor searching for the site of the paintings of Persephone will find one tomb on the right-hand side of the Karakal hall and the second one about 10 metres further along on the opposite side.

**Modern technology reveals a Greek goddess in Alexandria, Sherine Nasr reports**

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## Underwater cleanup

OVER 290 hotel guests, 15 staff members and four diving instructors turned up at noon on a Saturday in June for the first ever, large-scale underwater cleanup in Hurghada. Iman Mazhar reports.

The Sheraton Hotel organised the project, following trends in world tourism toward a more ecologically sensitive industry. "Hotel guests are increasingly taking an interest in protecting the environment," said the hotel manager, Mohammed Zekralia. "Last winter we spent several weeks planting trees and cleaning up the area around the hotel."

The Aqua Centre, stationed on the beach, distributed masks, flip-flops and plastic bags to volunteers. Two boats were used to help collect the garbage which included plastic bottles and bags, light bulbs, broken glass, broken chains, scraps of iron, rope, anchors and shoes, "about a ton and a half of rubbish."

The day was a huge success and everyone was elated. "I salvaged iron bars from the sea," said Kam Heinz, a German hotel guest. "I enjoyed the day because I care about the environment and really like Hurghada. I hope it remains clean until I return," said Schuller, another volunteer from Germany. The hotel staff actively salvaged scrap from shallow water, while Remo and Thier, two volunteers from Switzerland, joined Egyptian divers Walid El-Sawi and Ali El-Said in deeper water.

A precedent has been set. The Sheraton plans to continue the programme with "underwater cleanups" every two months. Hopefully other resorts along the Red Sea will follow this example.

## How to get there

### Buses

**Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.**

### Trains

**Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramses Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3355.**

### Cairo-Luxor-Aswan

**"French" deluxe trains with sleepers**  
**Services to Luxor and Aswan.**  
**7:40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6:40 am and Aswan, arrival 8:30am and 10am). Tickets LE1294 for foreigners, LE1129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners.**

### Cairo-Alexandria

**Services every half hour from 5:30am to 10pm from Tahrir, then Almaza, Alexandria and the airport.**

### Cairo-Luxor-Aswan

**Services to Luxor and Aswan.**  
**6:45pm, 8:45pm and 9:45pm. Tickets LE1294 for foreigners, LE1129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners.**

### "Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers

**Services to Luxor and Aswan.**  
**6:45pm, 8:45pm and 9:45pm. Tickets LE1294 for foreigners, LE1129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners.**

### Cairo-Marsa Matrouh

**Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir square.**

### Cairo-Sidi Abd el-Rahman

**Services at 6:30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3:45pm. Tickets LE36.**

### Cairo-Port Said

**Services every half hour from 6am to 8pm, then Vant, 10am, 3pm, and 4:30pm, from Almaza, then Ramses Street.**

### Cairo-Hurghada

**Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza and Almaza.**

### Cairo-Port Said

**Services 6:45am, from Ramses Square in Alexandria. Departs 7am. Depart Sidi Abd el-Rahman 9am, 1pm, noon, 3pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE31, second class LE37.**

### Cairo-Alexandria

**"Turkish" trains**  
**7:40pm, 9pm, 11pm and 12:30am.**

### Cairo-Sidi Abd el-Rahman

**Services at 6:30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3:45pm. Tickets LE36.**

### Cairo-Port Said

**Services 6:20am and 8:45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE46.**

### EgyptAir

**There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check**

**Egyptair: 630-3999-Open 380-2444 or Hilton 739-5000.**

### Cairo-Aswan

**Tickets LE300 for Egyptians, LE300 for foreigners, both round-trip.**

### Cairo-Luxor

**Tickets LE220 for Egyptians, LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.**

### Cairo-Hurghada

**Tickets LE238 for Egyptians, LE280 for foreigners, both round-trip.**

### Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh

**Tickets LE238 for Egyptians, LE280 for foreigners, both round-trip.**

### Egypt Delta Bus Company

**Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, and Ismailia. Passengers depart from Qalati and Ismailia and Suez, then Ramleh Square, Alexandria, departs Hurghada noon and 3pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter.**

### East Delta Bus Company

**Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, and Ismailia. Passengers depart from Qalati and Ismailia and Suez, then Ramleh Square, Alexandria, departs Hurghada noon and 3pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter.**

### Cairo-Ismailia

**Services every 45 minutes from 6:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh

**Services every 45 mins from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Sidi Abd el-Rahman

**Services every 45 mins from 6:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Suez

**Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Egyptian

**Services every hour from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-El-Arish

**Services every hour from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Hurghada

**Services every hour from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Aswan

**Services every hour from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Sinai

**Services every hour from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Port Said

**Services every hour from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

### Cairo-Luxor

**Services every hour from 7:30am to 9pm, from Qalati, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE20 each way.**

# Better you bet

The Egyptian Paralympic team came home to a rousing welcome at Cairo Airport as they bettered on their promise to make Egypt proud. Abeer Anwar joined in the cheering

Cairo Airport was a hive of activity last week as preparations were underway for the triumphant arrival of the Egyptian Paralympic delegation at Terminal II.

The delegation had left for the Atlanta Paralympics with the avowed intention of winning 25 medals. By the closing days of the Games, they were well on their way to grabbing 30 to place themselves 21st among the 129 competing nations.

As the team disembarked, over 200 supporters, including Abdel-Moneim El-Ehara, the head of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and Major Said Kamel, deputy president of Cairo Airport, were on hand to welcome the athletes home from Atlanta.

Amid boisterous fanfare, including a folkloric musical troupe, gold medal winner and world record holder Ahmed Gomaa was conveyed on fans' shoulders around the hall.

Fans from all over Egypt gave a sustained *zaghouta* as Dr El-Ehara stepped forward to greet the athletes and convey the congratulations of President Mubarak for their achievement. El-Ehara also announced — to gold medal calibre applause — the SCA's intention to increase the amount of money awarded to each medal winner: LE30,000 for the gold medal, 25,000 for the silver and 20,000 for the bronze.

The SCA head announced that Prime Minister Gamal had agreed to subsidize the Egyptian Handicapped Federation with one and a half million pounds and a donation of 25 feddans of land to construct a special training centre for the disabled.

"I am very happy that the athletes were able to challenge their disability and achieve such great results," El-Ehara said.

The athletes were overcome with emotion at the welcome they received from family and friends as well as complete strangers.

An elderly woman remarked on how proud the delegation had made her feel and how she had decided to come to congratulate them herself.

The athletes expressed their desire that the level of support that the disabled receive would continue to improve and more attention would be given to athletes living and training in outlying governorates. Medal winners Karima Zaki and Mervat El-Sayed have been training in inadequate conditions in Alexandria.

The benefits of support to maintaining the prominence of Egypt at the Games was emphasised by Ahmed Khairy, the gold and silver medalist in the discus throw and javelin. "This year's Paralympic teams were powerful competitors as a number of countries have developed and prepared strong athletes," he said.

Sherif El-Husseini, silver medalist on the weightlifting squad said that the differences between disabled and other athletes lies in the outdoors; the former have. "We feel we are not only challenging our disability but the perception and prejudices directed at us," he told the Weekly.

As a first step towards the fulfilment of their dream of improving the status of disabled athletes in Egypt, Dr Nabil Salem, head of the Egyptian Handicapped Federation decided to increase the number of athletes practicing sports to improve the base and variety in selection for the Sydney Paralympics.

As a first step towards this goal a number of clubs and youth centres will be built nationwide to propagate the acceptance of the disabled practicing sports. The number of national and international competitions will increase to facilitate the progress of the athletes.

"If we can accomplish this, by the Paralympics 2000 in Sydney we will be able to double the amount of medals we scored in Atlanta '96," commented Salem.

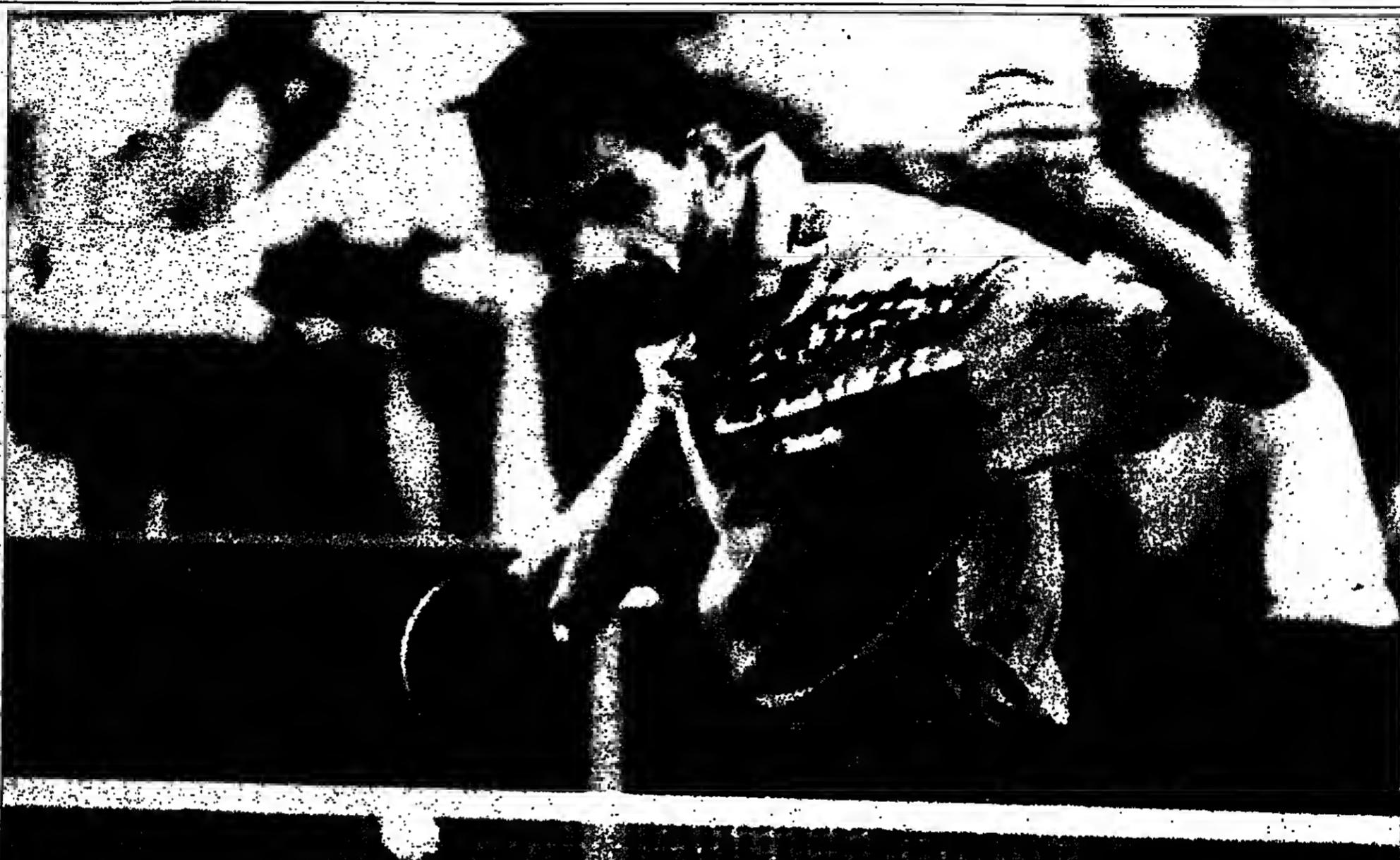
Egypt brought home 30 medals — five more than they vowed to win — ranking 21st at the largest Games in Paralympic history. The athletics team, defeating such strong countries as Poland, Italy, and Turkey, ranked 10th. The weightlifting squad took fourth place and swimming team's Essam Zeidan was able to score silver in the 50m backstroke.



Egyptian Paralympics gold medalist Ahmed Gomaa's splitting return

Egypt's Paralympic delegation on their arrival at Cairo Airport

photos: Seif Ibrahim



Ashraf Sobhi, Egypt's champion and the winner of the Arab title playing in the final

photo: Amr Gamal

The 15th Arab Table Tennis Championship came to a close last week with Ashraf Sobhi taking the Arab champion title after he defeated Hamad Al-Hamdi of Qatar.

## The golden man

Ashraf Sobhi's 3-1 defeat of Qatar's no 1, Hamad Al-Hamdi was the competition surprise despite his being the 1994 and 1996 national champion reports Abeer Anwar.

Sobhi leaves the spotlight to others, preferring to steer clear of the media in order to concentrate on his training. With all attention on the former Arab champion Ashraf Helmi no one predicted that Sobhi would emerge as the new champ. Helmi was beaten in the quarter-finals by Sobhi's final rival Al-Hamdi. Sherif El-Saket's overthrow by Sobhi in the semi-finals opened the way for Sobhi to become the championship star.

Sobhi, first took up table tennis at the age of 13 following in the footsteps of his eldest brother. It wasn't long before he developed a real love for the game and began training at El-Zawia El-Hamra Youth Centre. His insistence on rigorous training and punctuality attracted the attention of Mohamed Gherib, the centre's table tennis coach. Gherib's decision to foster Sobhi's training enabled him to progress quickly.

At the age of 15, Sobhi participated in his first official competition at the Cairo District Youth Centre's team championships.

"I played the first match and I won before I realised that I was playing against a player from Ahli. If I had known that beforehand, I think I would have lost through fear," Sobhi recalled. The Ahli player asked Sobhi why he hadn't

joined a famous club like Ahli. Sobhi's immediate reply was, "I don't know where Ahli club is."

As a result of his performance in the championship, Sobhi was invited to join the Cairo District team. He accepted and the move enabled him to gain experience from more seasoned players.

Fortune intervened when Sobhi's performance and progress caught the attention of the Heliolido table tennis captain who advised him to transfer to Heliolido. Shortly after making the switch Sobhi found himself playing with the Heliolido under-17 team in the Cairo District teams championship.

"I played the first match against Ahmed Demerdash, an Ahli player. I won the first and second game but I lost after that to lose the match 3-2," recounted Sobhi.

Still due to his bold performance, Sobhi received an offer to play for Ahli and he joined the club at the age of 19. Ahli's first team of players were absent for exams and so Sobhi had a chance to train with the second team and get in contact with experienced players.

"I was training hard day and night because I wanted to prove myself. I was so driven I used to come to the club even on cold rainy winter days when no one was there. I trained by myself or with Nabil Meshaie, Egypt's champion at the time," said Sobhi.

Sobhi continued to train hard until he received an offer to play with Zamalek. He decided to make the switch because he was unable to participate in of-

ficial championships under Ahli's name as Ahli was unable to free him from Heliolido. Sobhi played his first national championship with Zamalek in 1989 against such national team players as Alaa Moustafa and Mohamed Shabany and managed to come in third.

The most remarkable match in his life, according to Sobhi, was the final match he played in the League tournament against Ahli player, Adel Mo

saad who flew in from his home in Germany.

"I trained very hard and I was able to beat him in two games to his one. But because we were playing teams Ahli won the final match because my team-mates lost to the other Ahli players," recalled Sobhi.

"I also remember that match because it was the first time the fans were cheering, 'Play Sobhi, Play Sobhi, Play!', which is what they shout whenever I play."

After he won third place in his first national championship, people said that Sobhi was just lucky. But after he was able to play such a strong match against Mosad, they began to recognise him as a very good and talented player. In the same year, 1989, Sobhi was included in the national team and he was able to win fourth place in the Arab Championship in Syria which was also his first international competition.

Soon after, Sobhi took advantage of the open season to transfer back to his old club Ahli.

At the Arab Championship in 1994, Egypt took first place in the team's event. Sobhi won his two

matches and in the singles he came in second. Sobhi was also able to win third place in the African Championship held in Egypt in 1994. Sobhi participated in the 1993 World Championship in Sweden and in 1995 in China. In both championships Sobhi was able to rank 12th.

The Qatar International Championship was a remarkable event for Sobhi, as he met a member of the Japanese national team in his fourth match. In the first game, Sobhi was able to defeat him with a difference of 8 points. He took the second game but lost the other three to lose the match 3-2.

"All the Japanese players and world champions could not believe that an Egyptian player could play in such a way and achieve such a score to the extent that they thought that there was a mistake in the scoreboard and that the Japanese player was the winner in the first two games," Sobhi fondly recalled.

The champion hopes to add the African title to his achievements in the coming African Championship in Kenya next December. Sobhi wishes to emulate Ashraf Helmi who was able to win the title in 1992.

Sobhi, who ranks 240th in the world, is hard at work training to play for Ahli in the upcoming Arab Club Championships in Lebanon in October.

## A riotous draw

A near riot was narrowly prevented as Ahli met Ismaili in a draw. Eric Asomugha ducked in for a look



Waled Salaheddin beat the keeper and blew up the 7th minute scoring chance

attacks but no one to finish them. For all his exertions Salaheddin's efforts were not enough to deliver the goods.

Ismaili, with Westerhof still on a provisional basis, was impressive on the attack and the right wing was almost nonexistent. Magdi Sayad and Mohamed Abdel-Raouf lacked coordination on the attack and posed no real threat to their opponents.

Bashir Abdel-Samat, carefully monitored by Ahli, was overwhelmed. His energy depleted, he was replaced by Mohamed Aidi-Garsina in the second half.

Playing a tip-top game from the midfield, Ismaili was still not composed enough to penetrate.

Satisfied with the result, but displeased that the pattern was not exactly according to his instructions, Westerhof said: "This is a new system. It is what I did with Nigeria. The team hasn't fully adjusted to it yet, but it will take some time."

In the other third week results, Tarek Mustafa gave Zamalek a 1-0 away victory over Aswan in the latter's home town. Ahead of Ahli and Ismaili, Zamalek now occupies the second position on the table behind Mansura with nine points. Another home defeat was dealt in Suez's 2-0 loss to Arab Contractors. Mansuri drew 2-2 at home with Aluminum.

In home wins, Ittihad of Alexandria bested Mariek 3-2, Ittihad Osman beat Shebin 1-0, Mansura defeated Baladiya Metalla 2-0 and Qena won over Kroum 1-0.

League standing:  
third week

Club	P	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Mansura	3	3	-	-	9	2	9
Zamalek	3	3	-	-	5	1	9
Ahli	3	2	1	-	5	3	7
Ismaili	3	2	1	-	4	2	7
Qena	3	2	-	1	4	1	6
I. Alex	3	2	-	1	4	3	6
I. Osman	3	2	-	1	3	3	6
A. Contractors	3	1	1	1	3	2	4
B. Mehalla	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Masri	3	-	3	-	3	3	3
Aswan	3	1	-	2	4	5	3
Shebin	3	1	-	2	1	2	3
Aluminum	3	-	1	2	5	7	1
Kroum	3	-	-	3	2	7	-
Suez	3	-	-	3	2	7	-
Marsa	3	-	-	3	4	10	-

Edited by Inas Mazhar

